

# STEEL HEART

Issue I ~ Reclamation



Ezine of The Last Cycle Kult Community



# STEEL HEART

## *Issue I: Reclamation*

The Last Cycle Kult forum presents it's first journal, Steel Heart: Reclamation. Steel Heart ezine is a semi-regular publication which aims to showcase the very best in fan-produced materials for the modern horror roleplaying game Kult. This electronic version of Steel Heart is made freely available through [www.kult-rpg.com](http://www.kult-rpg.com) for the personal use of Kult fans, and may be redistributed on a non-commercial basis provided no changes are made to contents or layout.

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The Last Cycle community is dedicated to exploring the darker aspects of humanity through the imaginative roleplaying of fictional stories and scenarios. While Kult deals with many perverse and disturbing issues, The Last Cycle does not in any way endorse, condone or encourage violent or criminal behaviour of any sort.



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## *First World Myth*

by Chris Warren

**SO. STEEL HEART. A PUBLICATION BY AND FOR FOLLOWERS OF KULT. A LITTLE PIECE OF HELL INVADING HEAVEN. PERHAPS A few words of exposition are in order.**

Kult is a fictional universe of many epithets, many faces. In appearance: dark, surreal, horrific. In mood: industrial, extreme, disturbing. In theme: apocalyptic, revelatory, mythic. It is a fiction which strikes a deep and resonant chord in the postmodern psyche, drawing from the deep reservoir of occult grotesquerie and religious obsolescence, and deriving motifs from the most powerful of horror sources both past and present.

Unlike the familiar forms of traditional horror, of Frankensteins and Draculas and Wolfmen, shrouded in their Romantic conceits, Kult delves deeper into the source of what disturbs us. It cuts to the very root of our nightmares, fully encompassing the metaphors of the above, and then some, in a grand unified theory of horror in which reality itself is the monster, and it has already swallowed us whole. Far from being a stale repackaging of a classic myth for a new generation, Kult is singular and universal; a product which could only arise from the philosophical literacy of post-industrial times, yet symbolises a theme as old as any human fiction.

In Kult, we are immersed in a fictive microcosm in which we are the deceivers and the deceived, a composite of industrialised anxiety, consumer anomie, primordial terror, atavistic instinct, combined into a fascinating and revealing amalgam of magnificent lies. Here the cold, brutal materialism of Lovecraft is inverted to depict a relativistic and solipsistic (but nonetheless horrific) universe in which humankind, far from being food for the gods, take centre stage in the roles of both sadistic master and masochistic slave. It is us who are the alpha and the omega, the beginning and end of this universe full of suffering. It is through our indolence and repression that the monsters of the world (and of other worlds) are succoured. Yet, despite this infinite power, we do nothing to alter our plight. We live short lives, enslaved, enslaving, corrupt and destructive, until we die, none the wiser for our pain. Lies dictate our every action. In ultimate honesty none of us can rise above definition as prostitute and murderer, and through our crimes we perpetuate our misery upon our children. But still we go on, procreating, buoyed by delusion, insulated from the horrors of truth by the tenuous authority of society and the charade of sanity. Security of belief, a settled spirit, a concrete self existing within a world it can comprehend, or at least have comprehended for it - all illusions, all forms of enslavement for ourselves and all those who will come after us.

It is this everyday illusion that shackles us to one modality of experience - that of hamsters in wheels, oppressed by a self-constructed falsehood, a trembling edifice built upon our subjugated senses.

And it is our senses which we have to blame.

In the words of Descartes: "Everything I have accepted up to now as being absolutely true and assured, I have learned from or through the senses, But I have sometimes found that these senses played me false, and it is prudent never to trust entirely those who have once deceived us." A scary proposition, to be dependent upon lies for our survival, and doubt the foundations of our being. But it is situation into which



all humankind is born, and is condemned to live, to be presented with the choice of mundane delusion or insurmountable terror, terror of the limitation of the self and its uses.

This is the central theme of Kult, and it is a distillation of a curiosity as old as civilisation itself: the question of what human consciousness is, and how far it can take us toward a true and unmitigated knowledge of reality, if indeed we actually want it to. In the mutilation of religion, reason, morality, mortality, the fiction finds correspondence by giving name, shape and logic to that nebulous uncertainty we possess towards our most elementary mental concepts, a germ which gives rise to all breeds of terror.

The stories of the universe of Kult locate us at the precipice of a spiritual well, a portal down into a distressingly familiar darkness which we half-recall from our life of sleep. There, in the darkness, waits a subterranean (implying the fossilised past) world of hells, long gone derelict because someone forgot to pay the bill of guilt. And all around us, behind the facade of common reality, we find a dilapidated heaven, equally as false as hell, a magnificent Metropolis, now nothing more than a battleground for powers that hate us and feed on our weakness. The Citadels of the Archons climb skyward, linchpins in the fabric of the lie, spiritual towers of Babel.

Note that the empyreal spheres to which these Citadels point do not serve as the seat of some inscrutable creator divinity, waiting to receive us and one day make humanity whole again. No, there is nothing up there. In seeking heaven, we should look around us, for we live in the last scrap of it, in precious, blissful ignorance, within our deteriorating Elysian prison.

Prisoners though we are, perhaps oppression is not totally bereft of comfort: billions of souls live out their lives in supine captivity, just as billions upon billions more will continue to do so. But the mechanics of this trap are weakened, and the cracks are showing in its construction. We regard the world around us, and we sense that there is something undeniably wrong. Yet we are doing everything right. We go to work. We pay our taxes. We love our families and read a good book every now and then. But the dance of staid conformity only sends us deeper into a spiral of confusion, aggression and fear which does not abate, but only increases. And with this escalation of uncertainty comes the degradation of our senses, which in turn leads to the loss of innocence as we turn to other sources to validate our concepts and ease our terror. As a result, each individual becomes isolated in our own incommunicable anguish, cut off from parts of our own mind, or a collective mind, which would otherwise provide the answers. The cracks have spread between us and become chasms.

There is a concern that perhaps there exists some primal responsibility that we have forsaken (pretend-busy as we were playing with our toys and worrying over what our choice of deodorant says about us). We conceive of a self-image more in harmony with the world around us, more attuned to actualities and requirements of an existence deeper than the materialistic, knowable not to our confused conscious minds, but to a subconscious Self we forebode as much more consistent and compassionate, fully sensate, independent and aware. This Self which we know we should be, perhaps what could be called an Immortal Soul (Immortal because it is harmonious), has gone missing, our connection to it severed. And where else could it be but somewhere out beyond the boundaries of rational, organised thoughts, to where our senses barely extend, in the places which we project our uncertain terrors?

The Self that we seek is lost, *out there*, in the haunted city into which we are afraid to venture. To our frightened eyes this world is a sharp and hostile urban existence, ruled by



*Eschatology I - C. Warren*



capricious powers we do not understand nor wish to understand, perhaps because we know already that they are but offspring bred by our failings. The city *out there* is your city, my city, universal city. Cosmic and everyday, kaleidoscopic and architectural, mad and rational, overflowing all sensory categorisation, a prison without walls, without definition. The penumbral world of the subconscious, industrialised.

This city that dwells at the heart of Kult was once the forest of fairytale, the unknowable wilderness and begetter of monsters, depicted through the geometry of dreams, and presenting us with the dreadful enigma of a maze: an architectonic structure - recalling the sulci of the human brain - crazed in its configuration, and of a design so complex as to make escape impossible for the demon which, according to myth, it was constructed to contain. Yet, the only entity bound in this concrete perplexity is us, humanity, the creators. In escaping the wilderness of the natural world, we have only created another savage garden in which to torment ourselves. We realise that we are prisoners of our minds, our senses, our artifices, incarcerated by our own fear and loss of control.

Kult is therefore an externalisation of the most internal, things we didn't even know were inside us because, in the instant of transition from sleep to somnolence, they shrink back into the shadow of a vibrant, false, everyday nature, into shadows cast by sunlight, so that we can get back to the frustrated doldrums of a would-be (should-be) paradise. But the waking eye will forever be drawn to the darkness of the alley at night time, to the unmarked road leading god-knows-where, to the cracks and chasms permitting entry to, and escape from, the safe and sane idylls of a miserable ignorance. Kult is such a portal. It dredges up our phantoms and lets them give chase; lost in the infinite city of the mind, with all our enemies, all our nightmares, all our demons scouring the streets and crawling in its sewers, it is an experience of threatening truth that neither the mechanics of waking reason nor the chaos of subconscious intuition alone can bring us toward.

In entering into the premise of the Kult world, we refuse to make a choice between reason and delirium, searching perhaps in vain for a synthesis of the two amid expanses of dead streets, harsh lit concrete, broken windows, locked doors, empty rooms, *out there*. We seek a state of waking dream, without intellectual dishonesty, and possessing the wherewithal to navigate and savour that plane of subconsciousness rich in occult lore and collective wisdom which we call madness or divinity. Upon transcending the schizophrenia of the city, of externalised confusion, we realise that the subjective urban nightmare and the powers that rule it can only but emanate from our interior, the source of all illusions. Their origin being the depths of the self, the terrible hallucinations of oppression manifest only in response our own desire, of which they are merely the symbolic resurgence. This is the first step on a long road leading to the reclamation of divinity, and the discarding of illusion.

Kult (a game, like everything else) is about striving for wakefulness. Through its surreal, oneiric, mythic drama, is an intimation of the path to enlightenment, to awakening from the waking dream of captivity.

And so, this is a codex of Kult in its ideal form - Kult by individuals, for art's sake, for insanity's sake, for unreality's sake; bits and pieces of reflected rage and confusion, contorted senses and morbid fascination, from people on the same road, trying to find common expression through the metaphor of spiritual imprisonment and the provenance of first world myth.

What if everything around you isn't quite as it seems?  
 What if all the world you think you know is an elaborate dream?  
 If you look at your reflection, is it all you want it to be?  
 What if you could look right through the cracks?  
 Would you find yourself afraid to see?

- Nine Inch Nails



# Prying Open The Third Eye

by Pablo Barron

THE THIRD EYE, ALSO KNOWN AS THE SIXTH CHAKRA, IS LOCATED BETWEEN THE BROWS, IN THE CENTER OF THE FOREHEAD. A great deal has been written about it. It is considered to be a door to inner and spiritual knowledge. Furthermore, it is supposed to be related to the development of psychic powers such like ESP, telekinesis, clairvoyance and clairaudience. There is a strong attraction for the development of the Third Eye among occultists and mystical oriented people, for which the opening of the Third Eye is praised as a major step towards enlightenment. However, the lure leads to a terrifying trap, for those unable to handle it. And most of us can't.

The opening of the third eye is usually achieved through meditation, but negatively balanced individuals below -150 may open it spontaneously. Both ways, the process consists of the opening of a hidden perceptual organ inside our bodies. Physically, this organ is the pineal gland: it is known in endocrinology as the source of the hormone called melatonin, related to sleep regulation, and also that it has a few optical nerves attached to it: this is why it is felt by the person who opens it like a third eye between the brows, but it is an eye which looks inwards. That initial stage of the Third Eye opening leads to an increased ability to perceive thoughts and emotions.

The problem is that the mind is unable to handle what the Third Eye perceives. The biblical legend tells about Cain, who was angered and jealous because god had manifested and favoured his brother Abel. God forewarned Cain that he should conquer his beastly spirit of selfishness and rule over it, that the will must be exercised in overcoming the beast: "If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it.". God condemned Cain to restlessly wander the earth, but protected him from being killed by putting a mark on his forehead. This metaphorical birth of our Third Eye and its unfolding in the apocalypse as the mark of the beast were crafted as warnings against those curious enough to use it. Still, our Third Eye wasn't created by any god: it is an ability which has always belonged to humans, and a sense that is very dangerous for the stability of the Illusion.

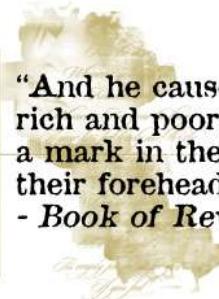
## Opening the Third Eye

There are several methods through which the Third Eye can be opened; the most usual is meditation, but it is said it sometimes opens spontaneously. An extreme mental balance can also activate the eye, both for the negatively and positively balanced. The main function of the Third Eye is to "look within". It is felt like somehow our own emotions and perceptions were analysed by a "sixth sense", which is this subtle eye's point of view. However, most of us are not prepared to handle what can be seen inside us. Of these new worlds, the unconscious is just the beginning: and it is enough to bring a stable mind down.

Once activated, the Third Eye is visible to those with enough ability to do so. Some children of the night have this ability, and usually everyone below -250 or above +250 mental balance will be able to detect it: and a Third Eye in the process of opening is a very appreciated prize for those in the know.

The activation of the Third Eye is noticed by a buzz behind the eyes, in the center of the forehead. This will last a day, and after that, the individual will continuously sense a warm feeling between the brows. The Third Eye opening leads to such an intense flow of information an EGO/2 throw must be done in order to handle it. If the roll is failed, a psychotic breakdown will happen in as long as two weeks:

Two important events affect the breakdown. First of all the bearer feels insecure of his previous point of view of the world, as a new sense has been added to the five he had. As if this wasn't enough, too much

  
 "And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads"

- Book of Revelation, 13:16



information is gathered through the Third Eye, so much that the individual will not be able to handle it: so, if the EGO throw is failed, he will experience a paranoid breakdown: the Third Eye becomes the center of the new point of view from which the world will be judged, and its bearer will notice it can be perceived by others. The breakdown will put the bearer in an extremely confused state in which the world has to be reorganized according to the new knowledge: he will be unable to trust anyone, even close friends, as this perceptual overload leads to a paranoid fear through which he will have to reorganize the point of view of the outside world according to these new parameters.

The bearer will try to look normal until he gets an opportunity to escape from those around him (the breakdown lasts as many days as the difference between the roll and  $EGO/2$ ). In this phase the paranoia can turn out really bad, as the bearer feels like everyone is out to catch him, and those who don't understand him. Ironically, this is true.

Extremely unbalanced individuals can feel/see those who are opening their Third Eye. As they know the unbalanced state the bearer is in, many of them will try to make use of it. Sometimes, if they "get the feeling" that someone is opening their Third Eye, they'll try to be charming and get close before it happens.

Positively balanced "mystical" individuals will try to convince him to relax into fear, accept this new gift (praising it as a strong advance in development), and change their "friends" if they do not accept his new behaviour, path and knowledge: this is a way many sects, destructive or not, attract new members. They will usually offer the individual a safe place in which to learn how to use the Third Eye: however, the mechanisms to handle these perceptions are conditioned to the path of those who the bearer just joined (who will seemingly hold "the key" to handle it), so this will effectively end up binding him to them.

Negatively-balanced individuals will try to use the bearer in a different way: as the Third Eye can be an useful deconditioning tool, they will try to kidnap or otherwise charm the bearer, and treat him like a Chosen: he will be tempted with knowledge and powers, and his mental balance will be brought down through manipulating the perceptions of the Third Eye and letting the psychotic mental states grow: a normal human can be easily turned into a Children of the Night this way.

Both sorts of predators have one thing in common: they will encourage the bearer to use his eye as much as he can, in order to enhance any sort of reality breakdown and tighten the control. Once the first paranoid phase has passed, or if the bearer resisted it, Third Eye perceptions are easier to manage. Still those who detect it will try to approach the bearer, but he will not be so easy to charm as in the previous situation, in which the predator was his victim's "only friend". From this stage on, the bearer will be able to use the Third Eye easily; avoiding a psychotic breakdown will require an unmodified weekly EGO roll, but that may be the will of the bearer. If the EGO roll is failed, or if the bearer willingly lets his mind go, mental balance will go down. As well, there is a chance to get a Limitation and end up locked in the downward spiral of the Children of the Night.

EGO rolls will still be necessary, until the individual develops knowledge over it: as it was said earlier, the easiest way this is done is through organizations with experts with enough knowledge on using it. Willingly or not, the bearer will be tied to this



*Eye* - W. Krzyminski



organization (those organizations can help with a +1/+10 modifier to the weekly EGO roll, which will always depend on the individual being near this group). Some positively-balanced individuals are able to manage the Third Eye by themselves, but this will require retirement from the day-to-day world and strong meditation. Each time the bearer makes his EGO roll successfully, the weekly roll will have a cumulative +1. When it reaches 20, there is no further risk of breakdown.

## Final Notes

I would like to let the Game Master establish the details of the real “powers” of the Third Eye. I've tried not to give many “rules” and “tables” to keep this open enough so it can be adapted to your tastes. Anyway, my final suggestion on the Third Eye is: think about it as a tool to *know yourself*. Consider it a subtle eye with which you can “look” to your emotions, perceptions and thoughts from a separate organ than mind trying to examine itself. This point is important: using a sense to perceive your mind in order to analyse it is much stronger than just using your mind to analyse itself.

This development can grow you intuitive and give you a control boost, leading you to high mental balance states. It can also destroy you if you aren't able handle this sort of awareness (and in Kult I like to think you won't) and thus bring you to the downward spiral.



# *The Thanatophagos*

by Wojciech Krzyminski

THE THANATOPHAGOS IS A SPECTRAL ENTITY WHICH FEEDS ON DESPAIR AND RAGE, BUT IT GAINS MORE ENERGY FROM A DYING human being, especially if the victim commits suicide. The Thanatophagos journeys through the Illusion only; as it cannot pass into Metropolis. This entity possesses various telepathic powers; therefore it prefers to create a suicide cult than to hunt. And the Thanatophagos has found a good candidate for a leader of such cult in the person of Thomas Cabbot.

Thomas Cabbot was an ordinary office drone whose ambition was to get a higher salary and a brand new car. He was neither ugly nor especially attractive. His dreams were standard and predictable, even his drinking habits were nothing above the ordinary. Every day he worked from eight to eight, drove home and watched the same sports show. Cabbot lived in this way through ten years, until one day.

It was Saturday evening, he was home. The heavy rain obscured the world, the sounds of the city were barely recognizable. Cabbot wanted to watch a football match between Manchester United and Liverpool FC. He sat on the couch with a beer in his left hand and reached for the remote control. Suddenly he heard a strange noise, something as a distorted choir of childish voices. Cabbot jumped on his feet and looked around, but he saw nothing unusual in his room. And then a wave of burning pain ran through his body. Thousands of white-hot nails pierced Cabbot's skin. He wanted to scream, to reach the phone, but his struggles were not successful; he could neither speak nor cry; he fell on the floor without making a sound.

Cabbot woke up after two hours, but was not alone. An alien, yet sweet voice talked to him, asking him if he was feeling all right. It introduced itself: "The learned men call me The Phantom Traveller, but this is not my true name. However, let it be my nickname in our communication. We want to communicate, don't we? So, you do need companions and I can bring them to you, if you can fulfil a condition."

Cabbot quit with the office work and founded a cult for lonely and desperate people: The Mission of Unity. The Thanatophagos invested some of his telepathic powers in Cabbot, thus he can see the auras and create emotions in those who join the cult. The cultists come from many different walks of life: some of them were quite successful if you consider only material aspects of life, some were completely destitute and homeless, but they all have one thing in common: they yearn for an affection and attention. Using his newly gained powers Cabbot gives them the feeling that they are at home, that he does care about them. In turn he can use them in many ways.

But everything has its price, and the membership in Cabbot's cult is paid with human life. At the end of the month the cultists gather in their shrine (a deserted warehouse at the outskirts of the town) to perform the Rite of the Moon. This ritual consists of three consecutive parts: 1) the Dance of the Moon, when the dancers move along the lines of a labyrinth, drawn on the floor; 2) the Sacrifice, when a cultist, chosen by Cabbot, is strangled with a piece of barbwire and 3) the Song, when they sing a short poem about "being together", composed by Cabbot.

The articles of the faith are simple: your despair came to an end thanks to Cabbot. Your life has got a meaning through the Cabbot's will. You should be thankful for all the good Cabbot has given you.

## *Introducing Cabbot & His Cult*

A PC's relative or friend has joined the cult. She does not want to speak with the PC, she talks all the time about "that wonderful man Cabbot." If the PC meets with Cabbot, he will be polite and sincere (even a PC with such advantages as Empathy or Intuition will sense no lies, because Cabbot does need to lie), but he will refuse to talk about the cult: "You know, it's a private matter. I am the leader, but I won't betray the people, I won't speak about their reasons which lead them to this point. If you don't like it, then go to the police, maybe they will help you with yourself. Yes, I sense that you have some serious problems. I don't need to ask you about it, because I've got a gift. Oh, come on! I know that... (he begins to speak about some private matters of the PC). Don't you see? I've got a gift! And now I think you should leave."



The police can do nothing, because they cannot find any proof to charge Cabbot with the brainwashing, for instance. Some cultists have given all their money to Cabbot, others have not. If Cabbot feels that the PCs are dangerous (it is your decision, Game Master), then he will try to communicate this to the Thanatophagos. If a PC has any special talents (*Empathy*, *Magical Intuition*, *Enhanced Awareness*), then perhaps the Thanatophagos will replace Cabbot with this PC.

Of course, our jailers do not take lightly the presence of an alien entity, feeding on their puppets. Let's suppose that a servant of Netzach (I will call him Petros) met Cabbot and his herd, but he sensed that something more powerful pulls the strings. If the PCs use Petros' help, perhaps he can provide them with some much needed information; then it can be his turn to ask for help. Petros wants the PCs to destroy the cult, thus cutting the Thanatophagos from its feeding ground. But remember, if a human being dies in great pain, the Thanatophagos feeds on it.

Cabbot has average statistics, only his powers of *Read Mind*, *Create Emotion* and *Mind Control* are important (if a victim fails her EGO roll, the power takes the full effect; only if she experiences a great shock will the effect be dispelled).





# *Sensorites*

by Steven M. Finger

&

Lukasz Respondek

SENSORITES ARE THE RESULT OF GROUNDBREAKING EXPERIMENTATION BETWEEN THE 1950s TO THE MID-1960s. THE GENETIC engineering endeavour had the goal of producing a super spy and assassin to add to the Lictors' security forces. Sensorites have exceptionally acute senses within the Illusion, with their senses of hearing, smell, eyesight and taste augmented to nearly 10 times that of an average human. They are remarkably well-balanced and often ambidextrous as well. Sensorites have no outer skin of their own due to genetic errors from the tampering of their DNA.

When deployed in to the field, the Sensorite kills a person who was working or living in the vicinity of their intended target. The Sensorite then flays the victim with great precision, and then donning the skin and merging with it in a parasitic union, the Sensorite is able to assume the form of it's victim. Once bonded with the skin, a Sensorite is indistinguishable from the original person.

A Sensorite's real body is a mass of grey, dexterous muscle. Strange transparent tubules run throughout the flesh, pumping a yellow, oozing liquid which keeps the musculature moist and malleable. Their facial features are hard to discern and the only thing that can be seen when looking upon their rudimentary faces are a pair of glowing red eyes. When not deployed, Sensorites are kept in a drug-induced coma and immersed in a chemical stasis solution until needed. The usual recruits for the Sensorite process were captured spies, black-op members, gung-ho elite soldiers or duped volunteers.

Many Sensorites function as porters, maids and general labourers to gather information and access to a target, using their senses from a distance and not drawing attention to themselves until the opportunity to strike presents itself. Not many were successfully deployed due to problems in their mental faculties. Many could no longer sleep or dream within a few days of activation treatments.

Most subjects to this experimentation and other genetically manipulated individuals had quickly developed severe mental illnesses and malicious homicidal tendencies after only a few weeks of service, presumably due to their enhanced senses. Although the receptive skills of those creatures are great, the amount of information they get at one moment is able to tear an un-Awakened mind apart. Sensorite brains were re-designed in such a way that one part of it served as a containment unit for storing information, the other acts as governing the behavior of the Sensorite. Unfortunately, due to some mistakes the gathered information started leaking into the second part which also causes some severe personality disorders. The remaining Sensorites are often sadistic, confused creatures whose personality is a sum of all their previous disguises and their life experiences prior to genetic augmentation. Those Sensorites that managed, through madness, to escape the Illusion, can occasionally be found hunting for new skins in Metropolis. Some have fallen into the hands of the Archons Malkuth and Geburah. Most of them were terminated after their missions due to their genetic faults.

The problems arose in the need to produce an unquestionably loyal agent but one with an iron-will, immune to telepathic Lictors and advanced torture techniques. Agents could be recalled via a "trigger" such as a musical tone, coded phrase or unique chemical scent built into their new genetics. Their brains were corrupted in such a way they would record elements of information subliminally, deep below conscious thought thresholds, to be brought forth at the appropriate time. When the trigger is activated they report all that they have observed via their especially keen senses to a Lictor or specially assigned handler.

All Sensorites are sterile and unable to reproduce via natural means. They do not age normally and their appearance depends on the current skin. The taking of a body makes them the ultimate Doppelganger for their line of work since their fingerprints, retina patterns and DNA all become identical to that of their victim.



## Milos Hasala

Milos was a KGB agent recruited in Czechoslovakia and later captured by the CIA. It was his American captors who forwarded him for the process of experimentation which would make him into a powerful Sensorite with a low mental balance.

Created during the early 1960's as one of the last of his kind, his makers tried everything to avoid the errors of their earlier experiments. At first they believed they had succeeded until, in 1963, he returned from Dallas having completed his third mission. Milos returned to the Chicago lab wearing a jigsaw of shredded human skin which he had strapped together as his "new self".

When his keepers tried to examine him, Milos began a raging, murderous onslaught, butchering all laboratory personnel, security men and other Sensorites that were stationed at the laboratory before burning almost the entire complex to the ground. When the authorities arrived, they found only horribly mutilated bodies lying throughout the facility, many stripped of their skin. Agents of Geburahs were quick to hush up the matter and confiscate all files relating to the incident.

Shortly after the Chicago massacre, Geburah's organisations began breeding their own attempts at Sensorites to spy on suspects, carry out punishments and infiltrate the organizations of Malkuth. But they were to run into the same limitations.

Milos Hasala had escaped and, after a total mental collapse, is now able to pass between Metropolis and Elysium at will in order to hunt new skins and carry out delusional assignments. Hasala is deeply psychotic, and draws pleasure from the pain and humiliation of his prey. His targets are now old acquaintances, newly remembered in his resurfaced memories, or simply random people whom he picks out from the streets from time to time. He enjoys killing his victims in brutal and bestial ways, often crippling their bodies, unless the victim is to be his next "skin donor".

### Stats

**Gamemaster Hints:** Move rapidly, full of nervous energy, as if everything was distracting you. Speak either nothing, or flood the players with incomprehensible mumbling.

**AGL** 17

**PER** 22/25

**EGO** 8

**CON** 12

**COM** (depends on the skin that is "worn")

**STR** 15

**EDU** varies

**CHA** varies

**Movement:** 10 ft per round

**Actions:** 2

**Initiative bonus:** +2 (due to their high PER)

**Damage bonus:** +3

**Damage Capacity**

4 scratches =1 light wound

3 light wound=1 serious wound

3 serious wound =1 fatal wound

Dies after 2 fatal wounds

**Endurance:** 120

**Powers:** Malleable appearance and voice, Enhanced senses.

**Limitations:** Sensitive to extreme experiences (sights, sounds, smells etc.)

**Disadvantages:** varies, usually split personality, bloodlust, mania (former life)

**Terror Roll Mod:** +5 (in his true shape)

**Skills:** Burglary 15, Cryptography 11, Demolition 16, Disguise 18, Information Retrieval 18, Interrogation 16, Languages 13 (usually 2-5 languages), Night Combat 13, Security Systems 17, Shadow 16, Survival 13, Change Targets 14, Rifle 18, Melee & Throwing Weapons 17, Handgun 18.



# Verlassene

by Steven M. Finger

VERLASSENE ARE BELIEVED TO BE CURSED HUMAN SOULS UNABLE TO BE FULLY DISPATCHED TO THEIR END IN EITHER PARADISE or Inferno. Somehow able to hold on to their meager existences, they are found only in the most distant, abandoned and remote locations, mostly residing outside the commonly known realms or perhaps emanating from a long lost subconscious memory. They always appear as black, clear or white puddles of fluid, and may be mistaken for pools of oil, water or milk. They have been rarely encountered by humans but seem drawn to the borderline areas when they are found, such as between Elysium, Metropolis and Inferno.

Some believe these creatures are a result of some failed Nephrite cleansings or early experiments on human imprisonment. Maybe they are shattered human consciousnesses or ancient mutant offspring from Gaia. Their existence is virtually unknown to all but the most elder and aware cosmological entities and well traveled Awakened. They are attracted to attack by vibration or quick, heavy movements. They do not appear to ingest victims but will not stop attacking until movement ceases. They seem to be driven by a reflex response alone, having no discernible agenda other than to be left alone in their struggle to exist. Depending upon the strength of the souls existence, it appears as a liquid figure trying to extricate itself from within the fluid by reaching out as simply as a hand to as powerful as the top half of a torso with arms. Some figures are demonic in shape, with horns, pointed ears, multiple eye sockets, lengthy forked tongues, clawed hands and odd, skull-like shapes. No two appear exactly the same and each is unique. Separated fluid mass rejoins the greater mass of fluid, as if willed or recalled effortlessly in someway. This occurs by defying gravity, seeping through confined spaces or minuscule crevices.

The fluid seems exempt to absorption and general evaporation. Limb movement is jerky and generally uncoordinated, such as powerful flailing blows, grab and choke type combat and crushing blows via its watery mass. The eye sockets in these creatures are completely vacuous. There seems to be a vast nothingness inside them. They are terrifying to witness and their movement produces a sound like a howling wind, accompanied by a multitude of gibbering voices speaking at once. They will fall back in to themselves if they reach outward too far, reverting completely in to their gelatinous, liquid form and having to reform.

Verlassene seem to have no known spoken language nor any other form of communication, and no discernible intelligence other then the rudimentary presence of a shattered soul.

If found in an extreme temperature situation such as that of boiling water, burn damage must be assessed to the victim of any attack. Freezing temperatures, like that of water, slow the creatures; liquid nitrogen or the coldness of space will freeze them completely. They will come alive again if thawed out. If two creatures are mixed together they repel from each other at great velocity, like that of a cannonball. They will be stunned afterwards for up to an hour but they seem to naturally avoid each other normally otherwise. Perhaps this is through some kind of instinct. Some fail to move for decades if left undisturbed.

Rumors have it that some are poisonous, acidic or immensely deeper. A Verlassene first appears as a puddle about 1m wide and 1cm deep, though it can actually suck a victim down into itself. Space and time have very little

Search For Missing Workers  
Halts Roosevelt Tunnel Project  
New York Times  
10th July, 1978

Excavation on an auxiliary subway tunnel reaching far beneath the East River was halted yesterday after the mysterious disappearance of three workers, Sam Leary, Alan Soto and George Prezbylewski.

The three men were surveying a new branch of construction some 800 feet under the FDR thoroughfare when they failed to return. While a cave-in is thought to be the likeliest cause, no structural collapse has yet been reported. Observers from outside the project have suggested that the men may be lost, citing the supposed existence of an antiquated aqueduct network stemming from a reservoir beneath Roosevelt Island.

The tunnel, intended to relieve blockages in the labyrinthine Midtown-Queens network, has been plagued by misfortune from day one, including a record number of injuries and technical failures. Now six months behind schedule and facing union backlash, the city is considering whether to abandon the ambitious project altogether.

A statement issued by Port Authority spokesman Jerry Sobotka revealed that construction on the Roosevelt tunnel project would be re-evaluated. "This tunnel is twice as deep as any existing line anywhere on the New York subway network. While we expected the task to be difficult, we could not have anticipated this level of upset. Our prayers are with the missing men and their families."

Sobotka had no comment on the reputed existence of the old underground reservoir, nor any other pre-existing structures far beneath Roosevelt Island being responsible for the men's disappearance and other troubles.



meaning to these creatures. They are unaffected by radiation as well. These creatures are said to be perceptible to Telekinetic and Dark Art type abilities, which can hold them at bay or repel weaker ones. They avoid electric current and strong magnetic fields, which confuses them. They do not attempt to dodge blows as they are apparently blind and insensate to all forms of stimulus except vibrations.

## *Stats*

**AGL** 16

**PER** 15

**CON** 16

**EGO** 10

**STR** 25

**CHA** 5

**Number Appearing:** 1 – 4 (Very Rare)

**Weight:** 85kg

**Height:** 1cm (Puddle) / 2m maximum extraction  
(torso & limbs)

**Senses:** Sense vibrations up to 300 meters

**Communication:** Unknown (if any)

**Endurance:** 120

**Attack Modes:** Grabbing & flailing, Drowning, Crushing blows x Limbs

**Movement:** 15m (Puddle form only)

**Initiative Bonus:** +18

**Damage Bonus:** (Assess “Burn Damage” if super heated)

**Powers:** Recall separated parts, resist heat, form limbs from fluid

**Damage Capacity:**

5 SCR = 1 LW,

3 LW = 1 SW,

3 SW = 1 FW

(Liquefies for a 24-hour period and reforms anew thereafter)



# *Leaving*

by Volker Baetz

So a hand is a hand. Of course.  
Neither a spider nor a claw,  
A hand is a hand.  
neither a hammer nor a saw.

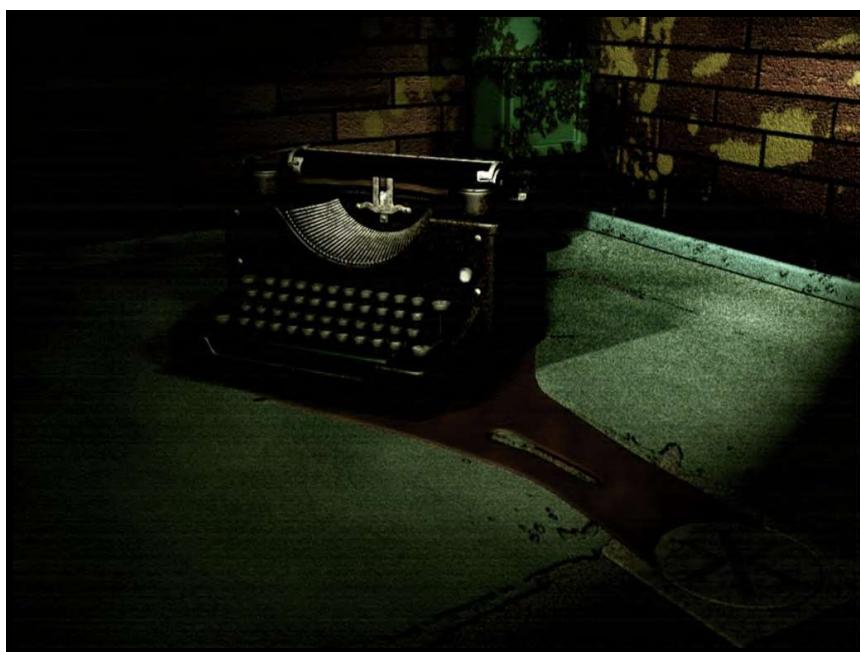
But I've seen what I've seen,  
still the blood stains my fingers,  
and behind my very eyes,  
that's where the murderer lingers.

And the city was created by human hands,  
not by unspeakable things,  
dancing to an atrocious rhythm,  
preying on us carried by cancerous wings.

Carl's screams still echo in my ears,  
had he any hopes to survive?  
I guess those vanished abruptly,  
when he saw what I'd done to his wife.

But no one can deem me guilty,  
I can't even harm a fly,  
so I flee to these strange suburbs,  
kiss this real world good bye.

~



*Infernal Machine - Broken Doll*



# Premonitions

by Jenette Downing

DREAMS, SHADY SPECTRES THAT WOKE ME SCREAMING IN THE DARKNESS; UNTIL THE SILENCE RESUMED LIKE THE BREATH OF a corpse awaiting cremation, or the reapers blade poised over the neck of an old man. I shuddered at the shadows from within that used nightmares to rip at my soul and shatter my mind while I slept, until I would wake up screaming, covered in blood, and wonder if it was really my own. Then I awoke, and feel something lurking inside me, and realize I am no longer alone...

I'd tried everything to stop them, but the dreams would send me running, screaming, from myself, only to find the darkness of sleep beckoned me with a cry of agonizing torture. A pain so intense it bordered on pleasure. Until the time I awoke from my nightmares only to find that my nightmares were a prelude to reality, and reality was worse than any nightmare I could have feared.

A foul coppery taste clung in my mouth as I pried my eyelids open, a cold iciness underneath me. I attempted to raise a hand to brush the red locks of hair from my face but found myself strapped to a shoddy, metallic table. My head still ached, though dully. Above me beamed a bright, fluorescent light not unlike those used in hospital operating theatres. Turning my head to the right I saw trays with the implements of surgery and science littered about. Further along the wall I saw vials, microscopes and journals laid open.

Fear crept up my spine as I swallowed hard, and saw the figure of an insidious dark haired man in a pristine white lab coat pulling supplies from a stock room. I hadn't felt this frightened since the night my mother was murdered, and I'd hoped I'd never have to feel that way again, but I was wrong.

Please, I pleaded silently, internally, Please, anyone...please...

I froze as I saw the figure pick up a scalpel and paused to stare at the metallic sheen. A free hand fiddled with some chalk while he began to dissect my clothing, "Just marking various places for later incision." He informed me offhandedly. He hooked me up to a bank of machines that displayed my vital signs in a series of soft tones and glowing vibrating lines. Pausing, he took note of my well-toned physique.

"I'm glad to see that you've been taking care of yourself madam. It should make this a little bit easier on you." Suddenly he jabbed a needle into my neck. The drugs acted quickly in altering my senses to the point of making everything sharp as crystal, but my bodily control destroyed to the point of near embarrassment.

With a monumental struggle I lifted my head slightly off the table to take a look at the grinning parody of the doctor, and gave him a meaningful middle finger.

"Fuck you."

The light glinting off the scalpel and suddenly being unable to correctly control my body caused me to bite back a cry of fear.

"Rot in hell you son of a bitch."

I knew the threats were useless, but right now, they were all I had.

"Let's take things slow. You'll get some soon; in a manner of speaking."

He motioned to my middle finger before administering another shot to the side of my neck with a fluid grace I found unnerving. The burning sensation that the injection caused to race through my veins made me yelp and whimper.

"Come now surely you've been dreaming of being the carrier, of no longer being alone." He cut my nightgown open in such a way that the knife indented, but did not puncture, my skin. "Have you by chance taken a look to the left of you?" He questioned me, a slight smile playing about his lips, the man's face striking a spark of recognition somewhere deep inside me, though I couldn't place a name to the face.

With a mixture of dread I slowly twisted my head to the left, noticing a fetus laying comfortably on the table next to a photograph of my mother. The man's deep soothing voice spoke with warming timbre. "It took me quite a while to perfect this one... Tell me, Heather... did you ever want children?"

"How do you know my name?" I asked him beginning to whimper. "You'll remember that in time." He



replied before pretending to jump and vertically slicing me below the umbilicus, the coldness of the scalpel doing little to numb the lance of stabbing pain. "That should leave a nice little scar." He said to me with a wink as my insides tumbled out like a bag full of sand.

With a transfixed horror I watched the layers of my abdominal wall flap about as if to prevent this man's entry, until he clamped them open. He smiled again and paused to glance at a bank of machinery my vital signs wavering here and there as he pushed my intestines upward. He moved about my uterus with a delicacy that seemed inhuman, slashing a careful entry point for the fetus.

"Do take care, all subsequent pregnancies will cause this uterine scar to burst, and any future babies will have to be delivered by cesarean section." He cautioned me, seeming to ignore my look of stark terror.

Carefully he cradled the fetus and placed it within my womb, nestling it firmly in place with a soft cooing. To my infinite disgust I felt it begin to move and realized with additional horror I couldn't even vomit despite my urge to do so.

Struggling desperately I managed to partially close my eyes, but was still able to see though a dim haze as various parts of my anatomy were being sifted through as the mad doctor snipped, clipped, and tied parts of me together. The pain rose and fell in undulating waves, while he worked, sighing in satisfaction and patting me softly on the head.

Humming a soft, almost soothing melody, he began to close my uterus and abdomen layer by layer in reverse order using a thick flesh-colored twine that seemed to twist and move as if it was alive.

Smacking his lips in satisfaction, he checked my vital signs one last time, and went to the sink to wash up. I shivered uncontrollably for long moments as I felt my bladder release itself and some small control of my body return to me "Why....?" I murmured weakly. "What's so different about me than someone else...?"

Wiping his glasses, he dismissed my question with a shrug.

"You're my daughter."

I was shocked silent by his admission, attempting to dredge up the memory of my mothers murderer and compare it to this man who claimed to be my sire and prove to myself they were not one and the same.

With a quiet laugh he threw away the scrap of my clothing which he had used to dry himself off. The room seemed to daze as my body became flooded by pain, his face blurring out of focus as he periodically fed me various chemicals via shot or IV, sometimes leering close enough to whisper how they help preserve the fetus. "Be forewarned my dear, if you fail to carry this full term, I'll simply be forced to drag you back here and insert another."

My eyes glared with nothing but contempt at this twisted shell of a man. Each time he injected new chemicals my body reacted differently. Sometimes I felt hotter than the blaze of a thousand suns, and other times, cold as a corpse.

There were times that he would vanish all together from my sight. Occasional shattering noises rebounded off laboratory steel while shuffling of papers and other documents echoed about. All the while, bone-shattering screams echoed in places of light and darkness where neither had presence. Returning to me, he sighed.

"I rather liked this little section of purgatory. Pity I have to leave it like this."

I jumped at the sound of his voice as he re-entered my view, but found myself quickly subdued by the tight restraints. My fear was beginning to fade into cold rage as I thought of this man touching my mother, of the way he used to touch me...

With a snarl of hatred I glared icy eyes glared daggers into the lanky man, my hands clenched tightly into fists against the restraints.

"W-What's going to come next you bastard?" I spoke through chattering teeth, my body wracked by cold spells. "C-coward."

"I don't recall being the one to cower in the closet leaving your mother to face death all by herself." His irises sharpened on me as if to accentuate his point.

I opened my mouth to retort but something screamed again in the background, noticeably more feminine than the others. It was as if whoever she was, she had given what little life she had left into voicing death - only to realize that she was still alive. My father flashed a toothy smile, overcome with joy.



"Ahh... she's awake. Being re-animated can be a very painful process. Be a good girl and stay put while I run some tests."

I flipped him the finger again as he turned his back to me. Straining, I jiggled my arms against the restraints, which held tight. As pointless as it was, it was a consoling feeling to know that I was rebelling against whatever came at me. The effects of the drugs were finally wearing off and I found myself more and more agitated with the fact that I was nude and at the mercy of my mother's killer.

Looking around, I was able to make out that this 'lab' was dismal, and the screams continued out of my vision, coupled with inconsolable sobbing. With a grimace of frustration and fear my eyes wandered about, gazing up at the large, open ceiling from which warped pipes could be seen, adding a dreary element. The sobs got closer as time passed by, as did the echoing sound of footsteps against the concrete floor.

"Heather, I'd like you to meet someone."

Willing my head to look above my chest, nothing prepared me for what I was to witness next. It was a soulless shell of a woman, who continued to wail considerably. Long, matted scarlet hair lay tumbled over the shoulders and eyes of a walking corpse. Its skin was ashen, hanging paper thin over a delicate bone structure.

Then it lifted up its head, and I choked on a scream. It was my mother.

"Such a soft-hearted girl. Which is what I found most interesting... She had no courage to resist what I did to her, yet stayed married to me for several years."

He fished a hand through my mothers hair, enshrouding the length of her arm with his own. Their shadows flickered together. At any moment my father might have pounced for the kill, but continued to dance around his prey instead. A slight click shackled both her wrists together.

"Then I allowed her to become pregnant so I could have another toy to amuse myself with." With a devious grin he set her aside and absentmindedly stroked my breast. "I figured you should have a chance see each other one last time before you go home."

With a sardonic smile he extended his hand and touched me lightly on the forehead, my world becoming enveloped in darkness once more....



# *Voices in the Dark*

by Steven M. Finger

I WAS NEVER AFRAID OF THE DARK. EVEN AS A CHILD, I NEVER REQUIRED A NIGHT-LIGHT. THERE WAS SOMETHING ALLURING and comforting in its nothingness. So I walked these abandoned passageways and subterranean tunnels, stumbling along in the darkness. The passage was on an incline and I inched my way down it step-by-step, deeper and deeper. Although I did not understand their nature, I had followed the voices down here willingly.

Occasionally, the fluttering of a bare bulb hanging from the ceiling illuminated the corridor before me. As I walked the path I could hear unfortunate insects being crushed underfoot, water dripping from high up above into puddles before me and as always these ceaseless voices that had enticed me down here. Although I was certain I was walking forth to my doom, I just no longer seemed to care. With each step I took in this dismal labyrinth, the whirlwind of voices got a little louder.

The voices were getting so intense now I very nearly needed to cover my suffering ears until I adjusted to the sheer volume of them. My flashlight was nearly spent. I had conserved all I could manage to in these last few stages of my journey into these darkened depths.

Unfortunately, I needed it now to progress as I had come to yet another dead end. I activated the switch and it laboriously lit. Through the faint illumination of the now dim bulb and the shadows cast from the cracked plastic lens, I was able to see a bricked up doorway. I noticed a small ventilation grill at floor level and I kicked at it and then beat it with a fallen brick until it finally came away. It was just then as the grating came free that my light source was completely exhausted and the batteries within, fully expired. I dropped it outside the airshaft and climbed inside the ductwork.

Feeling ahead slightly as I crawled, I continued on my way. I could hear rodents scurry away, I could hear an old creaky ventilation fan high above myself slowly thrashing about the foul air and as always I could hear the voices calling out to me. They were much clearer now but still haphazardly overlapping themselves and not as yet entirely discernable.

I found myself hopelessly lost in this black labyrinth. In my heart of hearts, I knew I would never again gaze upon the dawn. I had whole-heartedly forsaken the sun and the wonders of the daylight world for this my new world of the dark. It was all right, for soon I would join with the voices calling out to me. Soon I would share in what secrets they held. All I need do is answer the summoning of their calls. I'm not sure how long I have endeavored on this trek... weeks, days or hours, it was all fading to a blur in my minds eye.

As exhausted as I found myself at this moment, worming my way along within the ventilation shaft I was over come with the compulsion to continue forth. I followed the voices and I could tell I was getting very close now. I was nearing the end and I was almost able to make out the assorted voices relentless messages.

I hastened my pace; recklessly traversing through the dark like a child's joy at first crawl, I became oblivious to any possible harm that may well befall me.

Without warning, the shaft suddenly gave way and split apart around me. I fell further and further into the immense darkness around me. I must have blacked out during the fall I have no recollection of any manner of landing.

Then as suddenly as I had fallen I became aware of my new surroundings. Sitting up I found that I was stark naked and confined within a small hot metal room. A small black candle was nearly melted entirely away. I looked about in my fever of confusion but there was no door, hatch or window. I picked up the candle remnants carefully but its hot wax naturally still managed to scald my hands. The flame was now flickering down low. I tried to find some trace of air, perhaps a seam in the metal walls where I must have somehow entered through.

However, I could not find any visible or conceivable exit. The air was now quite foul with the scent of my own perspiration and filth.



I heard voices all around me. Various people were banging on each side of my cube like prison. They were calling for help and asking if anyone was out there. Some of the voices sounded vaguely familiar most likely some trick of my mind. I decided it best not to answer. I had noticed that two of the voices were now gasping desperately and then faded out and the banging had suddenly ceased. I quickly blew out the candle to conserve the oxygen left around me. My heartbeat seemed as deafening as the shouting around me.

For the first time in my life, I knew a true fear of the dark. I realized the voices had not been calling out to me exactly. They were calling for help. Some poor souls were even calling out in warning... to turn back. I guess I had heard what I wanted to, sadly blind in my own vast darkness.

The banging and yelling on yet another side of my cube had ceased. I was suddenly over wroth with panic. I started to wildly bang and call out for help. My heart was racing and my calling out quickly metamorphosed into screams for aid. I was getting intensely tired and ready to pass into slumber. I realized the air had grown quite thin around me and it wouldn't be long before the darkness completely claimed me as its own.

My mortal eyes began to tear... I now found that I now wanted a deliverance from this darkness. I was instilled with fear, horrifically terrified to die. I wanted to live... I screamed it aloud and unashamedly... "I want to live!"

Unfortunately for me, it would seem that this epiphany has come far too late. I dropped to my knees gasping for breath as the sweet morphia came over me, providing my only means of escape.



# That Haunting

by David "Impact" Joelsson

## I.

THE NIGHT WAS COLD, UNFORGIVING AND DARK. PITCH BLACK EVEN. I RAN DOWN THE STREETS, THE CACKLE FOLLOWING MY every step. Rain started to pour down, pushing the mist away as it came. The streets where haunting me, leaving me vulnerable and feeling trapped in their close alleyways. The sound of sharp steel scraping over stone told me that he had started to catch up with me. Who was this demon? Why would it chase me? Never mind, no time to think about that. As I ducked and slid underneath a chicken wire-fence I could hear the cackling laughter again.

"You cannot escape us!"

I was damn well going to try!

The moon peaked through the dark rain clouds, granting the shadows some more length. I cursed, and no sooner then I had done so, I could hear the scraping sound again, closer, to my right. I ran to the left, into the next alleyway. Suddenly the world became milky-white and shadows inverted. What was this new devilry? I stopped, only to hear the cackle coming closer yet again, he was picking up the pace.

I looked around. White bed-sheets. Laundry. Curses! It had stopped me far to long. I had this chilling feeling of Déjà vu. This seemed so familiar, but I could not remember exactly why.

"You can run, but you cannot hide! He he he he!"

I tossed the laundry behind me as much as I could, leaving it floating and twirling from its pincers. Next street, left, was an old alleyway that leads to the harbour. First left, then over the bridge and then second alley to the right and I would be in the docks and amongst people.

"You have fought well, pretty! He he!"

He was so much closer now. I didn't dare to look over my shoulder, out of fear that I would spot that old, half-decayed mouth, and those pale eyes. I ran around the corner, now for the bridge. I stopped and looked around. This could not be. To the left I had white sheets hanging in pincers, and to the right I could see a long scratch of something sharp onto the stone slab-wall.

"What's the matter? Pray tell, pretty. What's on your mind? Tricks you say? Hardly! The rules are ours to dictate little one."

I was confused. Then I looked to the right again. A knife was held with the tip against the wall. On the blade there was an engraved snake twisting from the handle and downwards. At the mouth of the snake was an apple, also engraved, which the snake seemed to bite at. The knife scraped over the wall again and I followed the blade to the handle, where those alabaster-white fingers took over. Yellow, claw-like nails hinted on the other side of the edge.

My eyes, transfixed, followed the hand up to the ink-black coat. Worms wriggled out through the sleeves, white putrid worms, their skin soiled with blood. The coat was damp, I could see that. And there was a spider web pattern of a slight darker colour that went along the sleeve. I followed it, even though I didn't want to, all the way up to the shoulder. I heard the cackle again. This was so familiar. If I could only remember.



“What’s the matter, pretty? You fear little ol’ me? He he he he!”

My eyes still crawling slowly upwards, widened as I came onto the face. The skin was smooth, alabaster and unblemished. The mouth smiled, then it cracked up so that the teeth could be seen. It had stopped raining now, and the mist was rolling in again, but those teeth haunted me.

They kept on smiling. Two, maybe three, teeth where whole. The rest where rotted, yellow-brownish. Fangs they seemed to be. A clawed finger came up to the mouth.

“Does our mouth disturb you, pretty? These teeth of ours burn in your eyes don’t they?”

The claw poked one of the rotted teeth out, and yellow pus came in its wake. I was unable to turn away, instead my eyes wandered higher. Please don’t. Don’t. Don’t look.

But I looked, and I saw.

On its head sat a top hat. There was no hair, but apart from the mouth and the lack of hair, the head was perfect. And the eyes. The eyes where milky, just like the eyes of... No, I could not. Would not. I rubbed my temples and tears ran down my face.

“Father? Don’t you like us no more Father?”

As the creature stabbed me straight in my heart I felt everything go. I had lost her. Lost her so long ago. The world seemed to move away, as if I was in a tunnel, and the tunnel moved away, instead of the train.

“Father! Don’t go!”

## II.

Black. The night was pitch black, and the mist was rolling in. There would be rain. My forty-some years had taught me to see what the weather would be in the city. I turned around and lit the candle. The soup was boiling and I took out a spoon, cleaned it off with my sleeve. Where was that wretched doctor? He was late! I put the spoon down next to the tray on the table. A plate for the soup, with some juicy pieces of salted ham already waiting for the soup, a glass of water, a piece of bread and the spoon.

It had cost me this weeks pay to get all the things for this meal, but she needed it. As long as she got this meal, we could live from scraps for a week, but right now she needed the food.

I took down the bottle of brandy from the medicine cabinet. The tin-cup was next to it, and I filled it up to the rim, leaving but a drop or two in the bottle.

A cough from the second floor told me that she had awoken. I took of the soup from the fire and filled the plate with it. Lifted the tray and took the candle in my other hand.

The thunder hit at the exact same time as the banging on the door.

“Open up man, ‘tis Doctor Hutchins!”

I put the tray down and opened the door, at the same time the rain poured down. The doctor pushed me aside as he entered, his doctors-bag slammed onto the table, next to the tray of food. He was a large man, with longer, whitened hair. His eye had the telltale marks of a monocle. His facial features where grim, almost accusing, and in his left hand he held a pocket watch as if to point out that he was in a hurry. His teeth where half-rotted. The man disgusted me.

He shut the pocket watch and put it in his front pocket. Then he dropped his coat into my hands and put his top hat next to his bag. He looked at the food, nodding approving towards me.

“Good man, I’m starving!”



He belched, and was being rude, and was expensive. But I had no choice. He was the only one who could possibly help us. He ate the soup and the bread with great gluttony, didn't bother to ask for seconds but just took more as he wished himself.

The last he did was to down the brandy.

"Well, it was certainly not the best of brandy, but it'd be a shame to let it go to waste. Now, show me the sickling!"

I looked at the man. He had just finished a whole weeks worth of food in less then two minutes, finished the last of my brandy. He was obnoxious, but mayhap he would have medicine for her. Make her healthy. That was the most important.

I showed him the stairs, and took the candle in one hand and his bag in the other and walked upstairs. The room was confined and felt putrid. The window had been left closed, because the moist from outside would only have worsened her illness.

As we came up, I felt the nausea of the smell that came from her sickbed. She coughed and I put the candle next to her bed. I didn't say anything, just let my hands caress her forehead as she looked up at me. Her eyes where milky, as if a shroud of pale white had been put to cover them. Her skin was alabaster, spotless but wet by her sweat.

"Well now! Step aside man! Doctor coming through to take a look at the wee one!"

He pushed me aside. Pulled down the sheets, revealing her nightgown and her feet. Then he moved his fingers next to her ears.

"Well, I can say right away, that this is something that a steady meal and a shot of Brandywine will do the trick for!"

He glared at me. I was too shocked to understand what I heard.

"But it'd better be quick man, because she will die within the night if she doesn't get food!"

I looked at him again.

"Come on man! She will die a painful death if you do not give her some food and Brandy!"

My jaw dropped. He had cursed her. He had damned her to death. This 'Oh so high and mighty' doctor had killed my daughter as he had entered my very own house. I looked at the doctors-bag in my hand. It was open. Inside I saw several medical tools, and a medical knife. It was delicate. Along the blade wriggled an engraved snake, aiming to take a bite at an apple that was also engraved more towards the point of the knife. He could just as easily have killed my daughter with the knife. Why would he damn her to pains? I looked up, he said something.

"Damn it man! Fix up some food and brandy for the girl! The pains will starts soon!"

I looked down again. No. There would be no pains. Not for my little girl. I took out the knife, weighed it in my hand. It was a fairly heavy knife, but it felt good in my hand. The doctor was looking at my daughter. He had no right!

I stabbed him right between his shoulders. I had expected a struggle, or even some wriggling from his part. But he just sank down and turned around.



"Wh...what are you doing man?"

He wheezed out the words. He had been looking at my daughter with those eyes. Eyes of a murderer! I bent forward and cut out his left eye. He screamed.

"Father?"

I looked at him. He had panicked, but he had no force in his body any more. I took his other eye, and let him sit and die in the puddle of his own blood.

I took up my daughter out of her bed. We needed to get out off this house. I had promised myself that she would not die in this house, not with me still alive anyway.

My daughter.

Six years is no age to die!

I walked down the stairs with her in my arms. She coughed, but where otherwise silent.

"Father?"

I put the doctors jacket on her, it reeked of his despicable smell, but at least it would keep her warm and dry. I took on my own jacket and opened the door. Out to the streets. We where almost rammed by a carriage as we exited our house.

She hung onto me bravely. My brave, silent, little girl.

"Father?"

I took the next street down to the left. The sea. That's where I will let her die. The sea brings the souls to the creator. She will be happy there. To die by the sea. The mist rolled in as the rain stopped slowly. Next turn right, and then to the left again and then over the bridge and first left through an alleyway to the docks. I turned right. And ran into a white bed-sheet, hanging to dry in the damp London air. It was almost funny.

"It hurts Father."

I hurried. I laughed slightly. Sheets. I ran around the next corner and looked for the bridge. It wasn't there. I cursed. I looked at my little girl. Her eyes looked frightened and moved back and forth. She couldn't see anything; she hadn't been able to see since the milky-sheet draped her eyes. I stumbled and dropped my little girl. My knee hurt. I tried to stand up on it, but it just did not work. I cursed. I looked to the side. An alleyway. It smelled like the sea here, my little girl could not see. I would do what I had to do.

I took her in my arms and crawled into the alleyway.

"It will be all right, pretty. I am here and I will not let anything happened to you."

She looked up at me.

"Father, do the not like us anymore Father?"

I looked at her.



"Whom Amanda?"

"The men in bright clothes. They have been around us for a long time, but now they are moving away. Turning away and walking out of sight."

She sounded afraid. She was delirious of course. The fever and the sound of the doctor...

(I killed a man)

I looked down at her, smiling.

"Don't you worry about the men in white. If they are truly friends of yours they will return shortly. I promise. Now, will you be a good little girl, pretty?"

She nodded. She was a very nice little girl. I kissed her forehead and held her close. I already missed her so dearly. But there was no way out of this but what I needed to do. She would go to heaven, and I would forever be doomed for this, but I could not let my little girl suffer pains.

"Listen carefully to me now, pretty. We are by the sea. It is night time so the seagulls are silent, but if you listen carefully you will hear the sounds of waves. The smell of the sea comes clearly if you give it some time. I thought it was too nice a night to sit inside. So I took you here. And I promise that your friends in white will return shortly."

I grabbed a tighter grip on the knife. I dragged it through a puddle of water to rinse of the blood of the doctor...

(I killed a man, and I am about to kill my little daughter)

"If you could see right now, you would see the millions and millions of stars up in the skies. The rain has stopped and it is a clear sky. Somewhere up there is your mother, looking down upon the both of us."

I wept. I missed her so much already.

"And that is where you have to go. Your mother will greet you, but I have to go elsewhere."

I raised the dagger slowly.

(I killed a man, and I am about to kill my little daughter. MURDERER!)

"No Father, don't!"

I stabbed her straight in her heart. And I cried out loud as I did so.

"Father. Don't go!"

She whispered as she died. And I looked at her in my arms. The knife still in my hand.

And I cried and cried.

And I missed her.



And I slit my throat with the knife.

And I died.

And I missed her.

And I would miss her forever.

### III.

The Night was cold, unforgiving and dark. Pitch black even. The sound of the rain haunted me as much as the streets.

“Run, pretty! Run as much as you wish, but you cannot escape!”

The voice carried along the empty streets, followed by a cackle of a laugh. I found myself running, but unable to say why. Why would I run? Where was this place?

(Eyes of a murderer)

I remembered something. A man. And a knife. It was all so blurry.

“So, pretty, we are starting to forget? That’s a pity, don’t you think? Our game has lasted so shortly!”

Who was that? I recognized the voice, but I could not say whom it was. I ran down the streets and into an alleyway to the side. I ran straight into clotheslines filled with what seemed to be white bed-sheets. This all seemed so familiar, but I couldn’t remember. I stopped for a second. Rubbed my temples.

Something about eyes.

(MURDERER!)

I ran again, simply because that was all I could remember doing.

“Aah... the pretty is forgetting. Oh well. That is the name of the game. It has outsmarted us. This time!”

I came out into a big street. The pavement was cobbled stone, the streetlights glowing slightly greenish from the gas in them. The end of the road was not to be seen, the only thing was the mist rolling in. All windows were dark, all doors closed. I stopped and looked behind me. The same street, mirrored, went the other way. Gone were the alleyways I had run through. A scraping noise came from in front of me. I turned around and looked through the mist.

Along the left wall came a short person. It was a child. On the child’s head sat a top hat, and it was dressed in a dark coat. In the right, claw-adorned hand was a knife, scraping against the wall as the child came closer. I looked at the child as it approached me. The mouth seemed to be an open wound. And the eyes were milky-white...

(murderer)

It seemed so familiar, but I couldn’t say why.

The child stepped out into the middle of the street and took off the hat, revealing a completely hairless skull. It looked like a little girl, but the mouth and the lack of hair made it so difficult to distinguish. It was



like something out of a nightmare. Thank god it didn't have any features of anyone I knew. That would have been pure torment.

(I killed a man...)

"It is a fine evening, wouldn't you say, pretty?"

It grimed at me. I didn't answer. I didn't know this thing. It stopped smiling.

"We said! It is a fine evening! Wouldn't you say! Pretty?"

I kept my mouth shut. Maybe this was a bad dream. The creature let out a sigh.

"Oh well. This is no more fun. You may go. We release you!"

It held out the knife to its right and let go of it. It hanged still in mid-air. I could see some features of the knife. It was a delicate knife, with a slithering snake engraved on one side of the blade, striking for an apple. I looked at the knife, mesmerised by it. Then the creature made a move with its hand, as if it threw something, and the knife shot through the air and hit me.

Straight into my heart.

And I died.

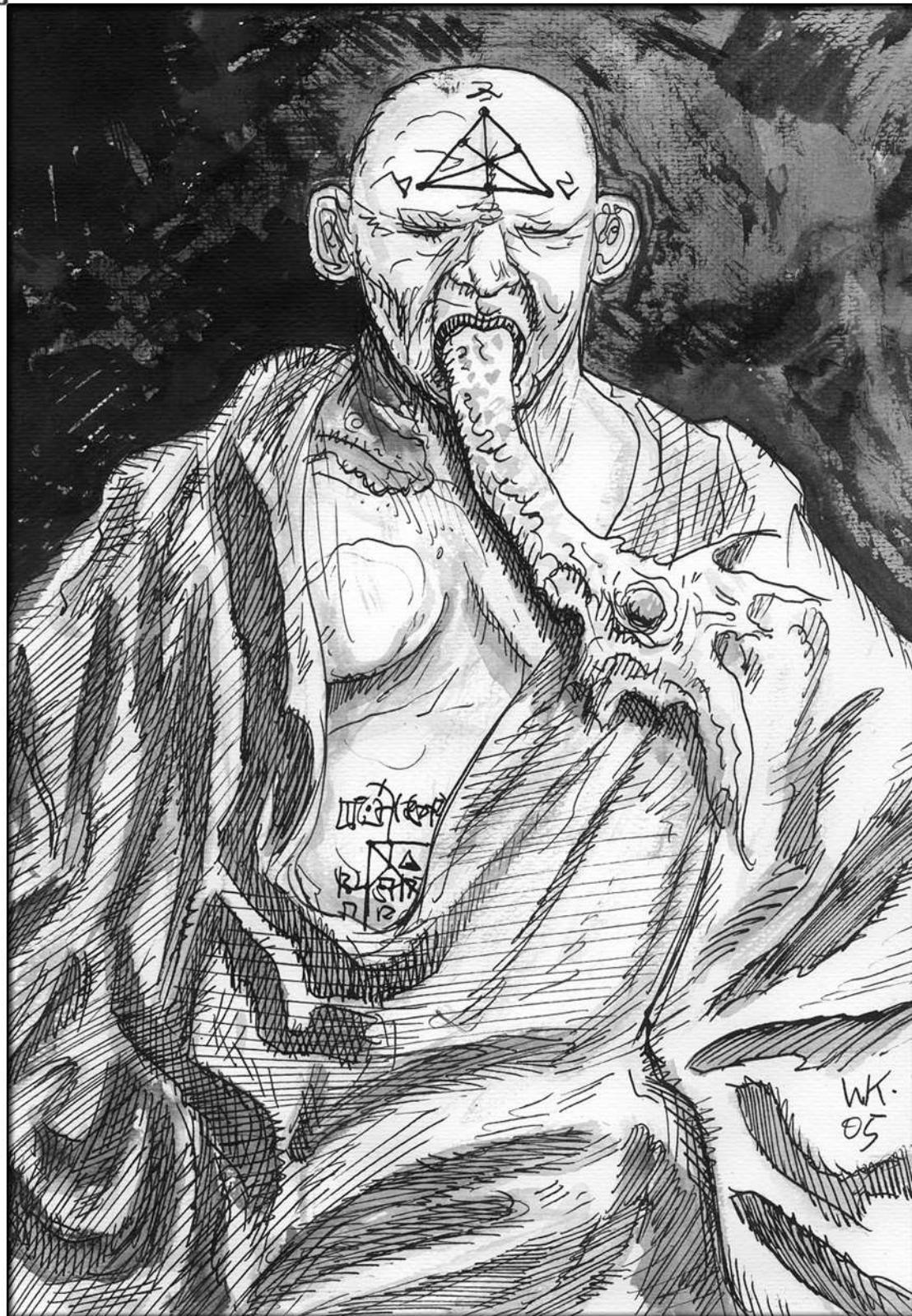
And I cried.

And there were bright lights.

And there where men in white to receive me.

And I live....

# ΦΟRNING STAR



AN ORDEAL FOR KVLT

BY WOJCIECH KBZYMINSKI



## Introduction

THIS ADVENTURE TAKES PLACE IN AN AMERICAN OR EUROPEAN CITY WITH A CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY. THE PLAYER Characters should have ties to the Catholic Church or to the University, because the investigation would be more difficult without such connections. A PC can be a lecturer of an ancient language (preferably Hebrew), another PC can work in the university library (this PC could see Christopher Barbos with Claudia King there), alternatively Barbos can be their relative or a pupil, if a PC decides to play an older character. If you, dear game master, prefer to run this scenario with established PCs, then you must invent another connection between them and Barbos. Perhaps he had helped them with his knowledge; they could contact him on an Internet forum of Biblical enthusiasts, for instance. Christopher Barbos is an important Non-Player Character, although he is dead. All descriptions of the NPCs are on the end of the scenario.

In our dark times few people do believe in God; the majority tends to think that He never existed, that He was only a false image of man. But even the faithful can fall prey to the disbelief, even they can turn to worship Lucifer in his many disguises. The satanists seldom consider themselves as Lucifer's prisoners; indeed, they think that they did liberate themselves from the fetters of morality and religion. Of course, not only Astaroth or Death Angels create and use satanic cults; NTzCh or MLKVTh can employ such cults as well.

Christopher Barbos strongly believed in just and merciful God; in the end he decided to become a priest in order to help the people. He was born in a Catholic family of Polish descent, and his parents were delighted by their son's decision. Barbos did exceptionally well at the college, thus he qualified to obtain a scholarship on a Catholic University; there his star shone even brighter. He lived in a small room in the University dormitory; a young priest named Thomas Davidson lived next door and they quickly became friends. Davidson helped Christopher with the learning of Hebrew, but he wanted more than a friendly smile in return – he dreamt about sex with Christopher, but was too afraid to try to fulfil his fantasy.

A full year passed. In the University library Christopher met Claudia King, a strange, passionate girl who greatly changed his life. They met almost each day and talked about God and Satan, about good and evil. Christopher was deeply shocked when Claudia finally admitted that she worships Satan. She tried to seduce Christopher that night, but failed; this enraged her, and she left him. He unsuccessfully struggled to remove her from his memory and suffered a nervous breakdown. School officials forced him to take a short vacation – they thought that he worked too much – and after six weeks Barbos returned to the University. Only few persons know about Barbos' relationship with Claudia – it is an old dormitory guard, a female librarian in the Ancient Languages Department in the university library (she saw them chatting) – and of course jealous Thomas Davidson.

Claudia belongs to small satanic cult called "The Morning Star". She has thought that she could convert Christopher and play with him, but his refusal disrupted her plan. In order to impress other cult members with her callousness, Claudia commanded her younger brother Samuel to kill Barbos. Disguised as a cleaner, Samuel crept into the Christopher's room in the University dormitory (the door lock was easy to open), and waited till Christopher appeared. Samuel stabbed him twelve times in the chest and cut off the nose. In his victim's blood Samuel drew a crude inscription in Hebrew from the Book of Job: "And the LORD said unto Satan: 'Whence comest thou?' Then Satan answered the LORD, and said: 'From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it' (Job 1, 7)." Two months after he had met Claudia, Christopher Barbos was dead because of her.

The dormitory guards broke in the room a day later, alarmed by the horrid stench. They saw Christopher's mutilated body and blood inscription on the wall opposite the door; the cleaning lady fainted and Davidson rushed to call the police. The forensic team has found only a few traces of the killer (the policemen are not even sure if there were two killers), but they have retrieved a fingerprint from the doorknob. The dormitory guard has given the policemen a short description of "the new cleaner."



## Chapter I.

The police are searching after “a young skinhead girl who wears black leather jacket and black jeans” and “a tall, young man with broken nose and long red hair”. The identikits will be released three days after the murder, and the police spokesman holds a press conference, during which he says: “We are on the murderer’s trail, we already have many leads, so you may rest assured we’ll catch the killer.” The information about the Biblical quote is kept secret by the investigators, and the police spokesman dismisses any question about it with the phrase: “It’s clear we are dealing with a case of robbery, because there are absolutely no clues leading to any cult activity.” Of course, the opposite is true, so why are the police lying? A robbery does not demand so much media attention as an occult murder does, thus the pressure on the investigators is weaker. Besides, the detectives suspect that the killer was hired by someone who was close to the victim, and they do not want to scare off this person.

All University staff will be interrogated, their past connections to Christopher Barbos will be closely examined. You could twist the plot a little bit, so a PC could be deemed a suspect by the detectives (Did this PC often meet with the victim? Has that PC showed special attention to the victim? Have they ever had an argument?).

The detective John Greene will ask the PC who is lecturer for a little help with the translation of the inscription. Perhaps it will throw a new light on the murderer’s motives? Greene does not think that the killer was someone close to the victim, as he is convinced that it was a hired thug with little experience. On the contrary, Gilbert Hamilton – the other detective – does believe that the killer was Christopher’s friend or even his relative, precisely because the murder was not done in a professional way. The detectives have interrogated Thomas Davidson, but he only hinted about Claudia King, because he is afraid of her. Certainly Davidson does not want to be killed just like Barbos was.

If the PCs talk to Davidson, he will not trust them, as he suspects almost everyone is somewhat responsible for the death of his beloved Christopher. However, the young priest can tell the PCs (especially if they are academics from the University) a great deal about Christopher and Claudia, because he eavesdropped many of their conversations. Davidson struggles to hide his longing for Christopher, but if the PCs are perceptive (or possess such advantages as “Empathy” or “Intuition”), they will easily sense why Davidson feels so intense grief.

The old guardian saw Samuel, but he cannot remember anything special about this particular person – “You know, it was an ordinary young guy, a new cleaner I think. Yeah, he had red hair and was rather tall.” The guard does not think that he failed to do his duty, in fact, he becomes irritable if the PCs suggest that.

## Chapter II.

Claudia will not attend Christopher’s funeral; she will send a Satanist to spy on Davidson during the ceremony, though. If the PCs ever paid a visit to the young priest, they will be watched by a cultist from the Morning Star. Did the PCs find anything important about this case? Are they especially smart? Did a PC manifest any special skill or ability? If the answer is yes, then the Morning Star will try to kill the PCs.

Firstly, the cultists play a little game with the PCs. For example, a PC finds a head of a pig at the door of the apartment, freshly cut off; a speeding car barely misses a PC on a street; someone plays black metal music very loud at the midnight right in front of the PC’s house; Claudia calls a PC and commands him to act out his sexual fantasy, in order to do this she will use of her power of “Commanding Voice” (see p. 79 in 1st edition of Kult).

After a week the Satanists become bored with these games. Tricky, the leader of the Morning Star, wants to shed some human blood for Satan. He divides his followers into groups of three and sends them to capture each PC; the cultists have tonfas and chloroform. I assume that the PCs are not good fighters (perhaps I am wrong), thus the Satanists have a good chance to succeed. Tricky will perform the sacrificial ritual at a rubbish dump – he personally cuts each PC’s throat and the blood is gathered in a bowl.



However, if the PCs find Claudia before the cultists start to play, they can win. Do not forget that at least three persons have seen her: the female librarian, the old guard and Davidson. The young priest can quite accurately describe Claudia to the PCs, and he knows that Claudia uses to hang out in a shabby nightclub called "Semetary", because he overheard once that she wanted to go there with Christopher. The club owner's name is Robert Smith. Claudia sees him as an interesting bug which can be tormented and finally squashed; she had promised Smith to have sex with him, but later she laughed him out. The description of "Semetary" is below, read it to your players.

*The club "Semetary" is situated in the basements of a sleazy housing block. Its walls are covered with primitive graffiti – among them are pentagrams and reversed crosses. A rusty staircase leads you down to a metal door with an intercom. You press the button and hear a coarse voice: "What do you want?", but if the PCs have the money ready ("Cash only, we don't need your fucking cards!"), there is a short buzz heard and the door are open.*

*The walls are deep red and the lighting is dim. Heavy, industrial music pours out of the speakers (Laibach, Tool, Voivod), so you can hardly hear each other. Most of tables are occupied by tattooed men, wearing silver jewellery (goat heads and snakes are the most popular motifs here). At the chromed bar you see a couple of pretty girls, scantily clad in black latex. They lustfully smile at you, and one of them asks frankly: "Boy, wanna play with my pussy? I'm all wet down here. C'mon, it doesn't cost much... Buy me a drink." Suddenly a fat, pale man in his forties appears. He has long, loose grey hair and a ring in his nose. "I'm Robert Smith, the owner of the club. Who are you? What are you looking for?" – he gazes at you intensely all the time with the bloodshot eyes.*

If the PCs tell Smith that they are looking for Claudia King, he will take them to a back room where they can discuss a deal. Obviously Smith does not want to deliver Claudia to the police, but he can use the PCs to blackmail her. And Smith has heard Samuel bragging about being "a ruthless killer." Do the PCs want to know where the members of the Morning Star have their hide-out?

It is a derelict warehouse, located on the city outskirts; its floor is covered with rubbish, on the walls are reversed crosses and a great painting of Satan (alike to a H. R. Giger's picture) adorns the western wall. The cult leader called Tricky lives there with his two female bodyguards (their statistics are alike to Samuel's, these girls are fit and ready to fight), dividing his time between reading occult books and sex. Other members of the cult gather there each night to hear Tricky's rants and sermons. The standard ritual of the Morning Star is called "purification of the mind": the participants chant and whirl in circles till they feel a rush. This altered state is said to cleanse the mind from all external influences. Sometimes during this dance Tricky begins to speak out his insane visions. The Morning Star has thirty members, most of them are street teenagers, tough and cold-hearted. Tricky teaches them that violence is a way to freedom, and they are fanatically obedient to him.

Tricky will mock the PCs: "So you want to play detectives, don't you? But I've no time for games, if you understand what I mean at all. Go away to pray to your castrated prophet, it will make you feel better!" Only if the PCs can offer him something interesting – an important piece of information about another satanic cult, for example – then Tricky will tell where they can find Claudia and Samuel, as he wants to get rid of them anyway.

The police have finally identified the fingerprints (Samuel was sentenced to two years for assisting in a robbery, thus he has a file in the police catalogues); the detectives Greene and Hamilton are circling like vultures around the motel where Claudia and Samuel are hiding. Their capture is only a matter of time. During the trial Claudia will not utter a word, as if a greater power has overcome her; Samuel will commit a suicide in the jail.

## Appendix

There are the descriptions of main NPCs, but not all of them have statistics, because some of them are from a generic stock.

**Christopher Barbos** was a nice, young man with dark hair and brown eyes. He often smiled. He sincerely



believed in God, but was not a fanatic. He wanted to help Claudia to find God again, but after a while he fell in love with her.

**Thomas Davidson** is a rather short young man (he is 25 years old) with sandy hair and pale green eyes; he always wears black priest robe. He speaks with a soft voice and never looks in the eyes of his speakers. Davidson dreams about sex with Christopher every night; he regularly whips himself for this, but the desire does not weaken.

**AGL 8 EGO 12**

**STR 8 CHA 10**

**CON 9 PER 11**

**COM 9 EDU 15**

**Height: 167cm Weight: 74kg**

**Communication:** He speaks several languages.

**Movement:** 4

**Actions:** 2

**Initiative bonus:** 0

**Damage bonus:** 0

**Damage capacity:** 4 SCR/ 3 LW/ 2 SW/ 1 FW

**Endurance:** 75

**Natural armor:** none

**Mental Balance:** - 5

**Advantages:** Code of Honor (Roman Catholic, 5)

**Disadvantages:** Nightmares (dreams about Christopher, 10)

**Skills:** Read/Write Native Language 15, Computers 4, Counseling 5, Creative Writing 8, Drive Vehicle 5, Information Retrieval 10, Occultism 3, Rhetoric 7, Arabic 4, Aramaic 6, German 10, Ancient Greek 10, Biblical Hebrew 14, Latin 14, Humanities 12, History 8, Theology 14, Linguistics 10.

**Claudia King** is a medium-built girl. Her grey eyes delve deep into the soul of any man. Currently she looks like a skinhead (black jeans, white shirt and black soldier boots); on her is a tattoo with the two-headed devil. She is 23 years old. Sometimes she plays a little girl who is lost in the brutal world, sometimes she likes to humiliate men, to prove that they are weak. Claudia did not love Christopher, she loves nobody except herself, but she respects Tricky for his insane imagination.

**AGL 14 EGO 14**

**STR 10 CHA 17**

**CON 13 PER 11**

**COM 14 EDU 7**

**Height: 168cm Weight: 51kg**

**Movement:** 7

**Actions:** 2

**Initiative bonus:** 2

**Damage bonus:** 1

**Damage capacity:** 4 SCR/ 3 LW/ 3 SW/ 1 FW

**Endurance:** 95

**Mental Balance:** - 25

**Advantages & Powers:** Commanding Voice (15)

**Disadvantages:** Fanaticism (10), Egotist (5), Sexual neurosis (sadism, 10)

**Skills:** Read/Write Native Language 7, Unarmed Combat 13, Daggers 5, Handguns 13, Area Secrets 8, Bargaining 12, Interrogation 14, Net of Contacts (handlarze narkotyków) 11, Net of Contacts (satanists) 14, Occultism 13, Poisons & Drugs 12, Seduction 11, Streetwise 14, Survival 8.



**Samuel King**, Claudia's younger brother (he is 20 years old), is a primitive brute. He does not like to think on his own, he prefers to carry someone's orders. Samuel is a tall, strong-built man with broken nose and long red hair. His arms are full of tattoos showing snakes, flaming skulls and Satan's names, written in Hebrew.

**AGL 16 EGO 10**

**STR 16 CHA 8**

**CON 16 PER 11**

**COM 10 EDU 5**

**Height:** 182cm **Weight:** 85kg

**Communication:** very poor vocabulary which consists mostly of vulgarisms

**Movement:** 8

**Actions:** 2

**Initiative bonus:** 4

**Damage bonus:** 3

**Damage capacity:** 5 SCR/ 4 LW/ 3 SW/ 1 FW

**Endurance:** 110

**Mental Balance:** - 5

**Advantages:** Endure hunger/thirst (10)

**Disadvantages:** Drug Addiction (15)

**Skills:** Disguise 10, Dodge 13, Hide 13, Read/Write Native Language 5, Sneak 12, Unarmed Combat 14, Handguns 8, Area Secrets 5, Burglary 9, Drive Vehicle 8, Net of Contacts (satanists) 4, Occultism 1, Poisons & Drugs 5, Streetwise 8

**John Anthony Holmes** works part-time as a guard at the university dormitory. He proudly wears his dark blue uniform, it reminds him the glorious days at the police service. Holmes was fired after he discovered by chance some evidence which incriminated an important politician. Now Holmes is a resentful, elder man. His receding hair and a beer belly do not improve his image.

**Robert Smith** owns the club "Semetary". He is an avid fan of horror and snuff movies; sometimes he sits all night in a secret room, watching a movie. He collects books about serial killers. Smith is a fat, pale man in his forties. He has long, loose grey hair and a ring in his nose.

Detective **John Greene** is a stocky man with greyish hair and hazel eyes. He speaks very fast and gesticulates a lot. Greene usually wears a grey coat, a steel-grey suit and a black hat.

His colleague - detective **Gilbert Hamilton** - looks quite different, he is rather tall and thin man, almost bald. Hamilton does not care much about the elegant clothes, he dresses casually.

**Tricky**, the leader of the Morning Star, is an attractive 28-old man with dark brown hair and ice cold blue eyes. He smirks at everyone, thinking that he is far superior than those worms. Tricky is preoccupied with his nightmares and visions, as he tries to discover their hidden meaning. If someone helps him to understand a vision, Tricky will see that person as a peer to him, not as a slave.



# Beksinski

*A Review Of The Late Polish Artist*  
by Lukasz Respondek

**"Shouting figures in a desert, people with heads of stone, some women giving birth, some people in the act of copulation, defecation, the dying, shot or hanged, prisons, windowless towns and so and so forth"**

~ Zdzislaw Beksinski a conversation with Wojciech Skrodzki

**ZDZISLAW BEKSINSKI WAS BORN IN 1929 IN SANOK, POLAND. HE STUDIED AT THE** Department of Architecture of Crakow Technical University but his career as an architect was a very short one. He started to experiment with photography (circa 1952) and he quickly acquired acclaim in that particular branch of art. But, even then, his works were different from those of the many others. Where usually photographers tried to picture the outside world - everything that is surrounding us - Beksinski's photos were aimed at the hidden, something very hard, although not impossible, to achieve with the technology that was available at that time. He was already drawing with crayons, ball-pens, etc. his fantastic drawings that were full of disfigured people and aggressive sexuality.

After he realized that the impressions and inner feelings he tried to impose were hard to achieve by the means of photography, he turned to painting (he later returned to photography, using computer programs to change and rework his images). After several expositions in Warsaw and Crakow, it was quickly clear that a great talent was uncovered. Of course there were skeptics, but as someone once said "True art must be controversial, you cannot pass it not being touched - you either love it or hate it"



To say that his art is disturbing is only licking the surface of the depths that are represented in Beksinski's works. A man with a candle is walking through a corridor in which the walls are carved with giant, skeletal statues. Long-forgotten battlefields (or cities?) on which bones gather dust and debris, and crosses are made of junk and haywire. Under the soft, barely seen cover of vein-like silk hide faces, disfigured lovers, human silhouettes filled with many bony fingers and arms sprawling in every direction to clutch at straws that are nowhere to be seen - not by them, nor by the person peeking at the artist's, as well as his own, inner world. Everything is full of eerie greenish-gray light that fills the empty city - crumbling, it's buildings falling apart like the tissue from a dead body. Tombstones with carved faces that stare blindly into the unknown, and only sometimes, the silhouette of a man can be seen, hiding behind a building with broken, empty windows that are wells for more unimaginable ruin. All this catches you off-guard - not expecting that you have been sucked into the fantastic, and yet so real, world of Beksinski.

What can a Kult gamemaster find in the art of Beksinski? Well, there are plenty of options. I knew this art long before I had ever heard of Kult; as a matter of fact, long before I'd ever heard of roleplaying. When I finally got to Kult, in the descriptions of Metropolis I saw the art of Beksinski. When I think of the empty



city that was once the divine home of humankind, the paintings of my favorite artist slide in my mind in a kaleidoscope of places long forgotten, but still not completely abandoned. Also, the creatures that are depicted in his paintings can easily fit into any description found within the pages of Kult books. And notice that those are still human shapes, distorted and disfigured, the spark of humanity can be clearly seen.... Enough. I'll leave the play of associations to you. I'm sure there will be plenty, even if the author himself refuses to give names for his paintings - those are made under certain feelings, impressions and should be also experienced with those - not necessarily the same.



On 21st February, 2005 the body of the artist was found in his flat in Warsaw. He was murdered by a young man who wanted to rob him. This callous act has left the world bereft of a great artist. Beksiński once said in one of his early interviews that he wanted to live through his works, but later realized that nothing lasts for ever. The future will show how he was wrong in that belief. His works will live as long as there is at least one person who remembers them - and he will live through them. Here I pass to you the heritage of Beksiński. Remember him well.

The works of Beksiński are best experienced in their full glory - in exhibition. There are many in Poland: in Sanok, Warsaw and Częstochowa. France is also privileged: they can visit the gallery of Piotr Dmochowski who owns the largest collection of Beksiński's paintings (and who kindly permitted inclusion of the works you see in this publication). There are also many internet sites that display those paintings, among the best of which are:

[www.dmochowskigallery.net](http://www.dmochowskigallery.net) - a large site with downloadable, high quality reproductions and past, present and future expositions (you can also order one of two albums with the art of Beksiński). The other is [www.beksiński.pl](http://www.beksiński.pl) - a beautifully flashed site with concept art menu and illustrated by the eerie music of Kantor.

Additionally the latest computer works were used as CD covers for album renditions of psychedelic-rock band The Legendary Pink Dots, and in Poland many books have featured his works as a cover, specifically the works of Nick Cave (And The Ass Saw The Angel, and both King Ink books).



# Kunst und Fanatismus

*A Review Of The Slovenian Industrial Music Group Laibach And The NSK State*  
by Pablo Barron

OUR MINDS ARE PARTIALLY GOVERNED BY SYMBOLS CREATED INSIDE THE ILLUSION; AS ITS BASIS, FORM ITSELF IS A STRUCTURING tool in the hands of our enslavers. They find it easier to make us behave the way they need if they are in control of such an important element of the composition of our perceptions. But, as the illusion shatters, they are desperately trying to bring its power to the fullest before it breaks down.

The continuous feed of conceptual maps through the now ever-present media is tying us further into an illusion within the Illusion: this is a timeless structure in which humans fully become puppets which behave imitating what they are taught through their television channels: it is not that the form is bonding the formless perceptions of the Illusion, it is that a second-level simulation is replacing the Illusion itself.

As well, our enslavers know that the development of different cultures in the Illusion has created differences on how reality is perceived, and though so far it has worked to separate humans, it has always led to the possibility of tearing up holes into the reality factory. Their aim is to bring a meaningless shared global culture upon the Illusion, and a shared global form of government and domination.

Opposed to such efforts, Laibach survives.

*"The name Laibach appears for the first time in 1144 as the original name for Ljubljana. It meant a city by the river. During the Austro-Hungarian empire, it replaced the Slovene name Ljubljana. The name Laibach reappears after the defeat of Italy when nazis and collaborators jailed, tortured, and murdered the inhabitants of Ljubljana. In 1980 it emerged for the fourth time as the name of the youth culture group Laibach. The name now suggests a concrete possibility for the existence of a politicised art. In this sense, the name couples the horror of totalitarianism and industrial alienation in its slavish form."*

-- Laibach

In 1980, the Laibach musical group formed in the mining town of Trbovlje. In their shows, they used a mixture of totalitarian Nazi and Stalinist symbolism. The name Laibach, a direct offence to their fellow Slovenians, was sure enough to create a strong opposition to them. However, their quotes were taken from Marxist authors, and they could as well have been authoritarian communists.

The government in Yugoslavia didn't know what to do with Laibach and the love for totalitarianism they seemed to have, which surpassed their own; they couldn't just eliminate them for using such aesthetics while quoting Yugoslavian Marxists such like Tito or Kardelj... And by opposing to the essence of totalitarianism in Laibach, the Slovenian government attacked itself. Laibach's original idea, was precisely to assume the shape of the state in order to oppose it; and this was done by symbolically identifying the Stalinist, the Nazi, and even further, capitalist democracy as an evolution of the totalitarian tool.

By using this inconsistent mixture, the aim of Laibach is to annihilate the symbolic dream, to show its meaninglessness. It is as well to confuse those using the symbols, as they're rendered unusable after Laibach's performances. In the case of the Slovenian state, it is considered that Laibach were the seed of the democratic debate.

*"Democracy ensnares people through the Utopian injection of desires and fantasies into a social bloodstream. Its hypodermic needle is the entertainment culture industry. It's a shared needle, and a shared needle leads to the spread of disease. In democracy there is no cure against its own disease. The East collapsed because it blindly believed in the*

Reject our work, reject the name  
Extinguish all our flame  
You're only here  
Because we want you  
To be imprisoned  
Within our frame  
- Laibach, Reject or Breed



*Western utopian definition of freedom of the individual. The West only survives because it slyly established a system, which insists on people's freedom. That is to say, under democracy people believe they are acting accordingly to their own will and desires"*

-- *Laibach*

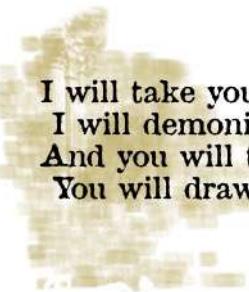
In 1990, a large collective called NSK, Neue Slovenische Kunst, formed. It had Laibach as a member and as its ideological foundation, and is an union of different groups with a shared point of view on how to act upon the Illusion but with different abilities. There is the Noordung Theater group, which is concerned mainly with religion. The New Collectivism Design Studio cooperates with design -posters, graphical propaganda. Speeches are given by the Department of Pure and Applied Philosophy.

NSK is a state with its boundaries established in time instead of in space. The state only exists in the places where NSK shows are performed. There, they use a tactic shared by totalitarian regimes, democratic media, and human minds: to reconstruct the past in order to fit the future. The symbolics and aesthetics of past-time totalitarian regimes are carefully mixed and adapted to the present situation and made inconsistent, to reveal our present enslavers

#### **References:**

**Laibach:** See the documentaries "Laibach – Bravo" and "Prerokbe Ognja" (Predictions of Fire)

**NSK State:** [www.nskstate.com](http://www.nskstate.com)



I will take your anger and I will make it mine  
I will demonise it and it will multiply  
And you will then absorb this anger into your desires  
You will draw my poison into your heart and mind  
- *Laibach, Hell: Symmetry*



## *The Cell*

2000, dir: Tarsem Singh

I WATCHED THIS MOVIE THREE TIMES, BECAUSE OF THE VIVID AND MOVING IMAGERY, NOT BECAUSE OF A SUPERB ACTING (THE actors are believable, this is sufficient for me). But if the images are the main strength of this movie, what should I write then? I will focus on the few motifs from the movie, in order to show that they can be used in a Kult game. The first motif is the dream invasion technology; of course it is only a provisory name. Such technology can be used by servants of Tiphareth to spy on the PCs, for instance. Such technology can be hidden in a scientific institute, devoted to Malkuth, or a dream magician could build it and the PCs find it someday in his abandoned laboratory.

The second motif is a beautiful scene in which a horse is sliced by glass panels, yet somehow lives on. Its heart continues to pump blood, and the animal shakes its head – maybe a PC will experience this – sliced, but living on through a few moments?

The third motif is bound with the villain of the movie, Carl Stargher (played with unsettling gusto by Vincent D'Onofrio). Stargher is a dangerous and perverted psychopath who captures and drowns women in order to place them in his dream world as toys. His obsession with the colour white is an interesting quirk, too. But actually I wanted to mention the scene when Carl steps down from his throne, and we see his purple cloak unfurling from the walls, to which the cloak is attached, and joined to his body via metal rings embedded in his back. This scene is a perfect, impressive example should a game master wants to depict a demon, Nephrite, dream prince or similar entity.

The colours and textures are very important in "The Cell". In fact, they are crucial in evoking the atmosphere. I looked at them very carefully, in order to remember them and use later – the light, the clothes and the pale flesh (or is it plastic?) of bizarre dolls in Carl's dream world. The film's score, composed by Howard Shore, juxtaposes a symphony orchestra with the dissonant yet beautiful clatter of the Jajouka musicians of Morocco, and is central to the evocative power of the piece.

It is obvious that a good movie cannot be expressed by words, so I can only recommend watching and studying this movie. Even the famous J. Lo does not much harm... And a bit of trivia on the end – the director of "The Cell", Tarsem Singh, was behind the famous REM music video "Losing My Religion".

- Wojciech Krzyminski

## *Bad Lieutenant*

1992, dir: Abel Ferrara

ABOUT A GOOD MOVIE ONE CANNOT WRITE MUCH; MOREOVER A REVIEW IS NOT A SUMMARY OF A MOVIE, SO I WILL FOCUS myself on the usefulness of this movie to Kult games. Harvey Keitel's performance as the titular corrupt cop is stunning. Simply put, I forgot that I was watching a movie - I experienced a junkie and gambler going through the sordid streets of New York, rather than merely watched him on the screen. Perhaps I am overenthusiastic in my opinion, but Keitel's acting in this role was very convincing to me.

In *Bad Lieutenant* you can find plenty of motifs which can be transported to a Kult game. If you want to play a corrupted cop, well, this should be your main source of inspiration. If you as a game master want to portray a true degenerate, then the bad lieutenant is your star (for example the scene in which the lieutenant forces a girl to enact fellatio, merely because she has no driver's license).

The most important scene in this movie is the appearance of Jesus Christ. It can be understood twofold. Firstly, it is the true Christ, the Saviour. Secondly, it is a demon who brings down the policeman. I choose the second possibility, as it allows me to ignore the question: who was the real Jesus (what force had sent him?). I think that the "Jesus" in this movie can be a servant of the False Rescuer, GamichicOTH, because in the end he brings down the cop.

- Wojciech Krzyminski



## *Saw*

2004, dir. James Wan

A DEMENTED SERIAL KILLER IS ON THE LOOSE - A MANIAC WITH A WELL-DEVELOPED SENSE OF IRONY, A STRONG PEDAGOGICAL streak and a boundless appetite for human suffering whom the police have tagged the Jigsaw killer. The Jigsaw's modus operandi involves designing a hellish trap for his victims, based on what he perceives to be their sins: a razor-wire maze confining a man who until recently was toying with the idea of wrist-slash suicide, a drug addict forced to butcher another person to save herself from a gruesome demise, etc. The various fates of the Jigsaw's victims are truly horrifying, and are a paradigm for the methods of Nepharites in Kult.

It is in such a purgatory-like plight that the film's two main characters Lawrence and Adam awake, chained by the ankle to sturdy pipes, with various clues to their dire situation, and the harrowing path to salvation, placed on or near their person. A dead body occupies the room between them, face down in an expanse of blood, a grim testament to their captor's sadistic will.

Lawrence and Adam's struggle is intercut with flashbacks to earlier happenings, revealing the extent of the police investigation into the Jigsaw, and his methods of locating and capturing his victims. This in turn leads to more harrowing realisations as the characters discover just how doomed they, and their loved ones, actually are.

Director James Wan handles the script well enough to deliver something close to its full effectiveness, though certain intense scenes (one victim's desperate struggle for her life against the ticking of the clock, a hectic chase sequence) degenerate into MTV editing and crazed montage. Such an approach almost works, but it is hard not to want for more subtle direction which would allow the scenes to express their full potential of tension, perhaps accented best with simple protracted shots of a victim's awful predicament, nothing but silence to amplify their terrified breathing as they struggle for their life.

Minor slips aside, the film is beautifully realised in terms of appearance. Not since David Fincher's *Se7en* has horror been framed in such majestic squalor. Harsh strip lighting illuminates the "prehistoric bathroom" of Adam and Lawrence's imprisonment like a public toilet in Hell. Soiled tile surfaces, iron pipes and the long-coagulated slick of blood around the dead man form a shocking tableau toward which the various backstories of the plot all inexorably gravitate. From the outset it seems inevitable that the story will not leave this nightmare chamber, at least not for long, and the audience, like the characters, will stay trapped in there also, right up to the feral, nauseating conclusion that the script forebodes.

*Saw* is a rare creature indeed: a gory, Machiavellian slasher flick, well written, decently acted and directed, and with a twist which actually works without being detrimental to the preceding plot, or to repeated viewings. A brutally enjoyable indie classic.

You know you've just watched a truly Kultesque movie when the end credits roll not to music, but to the simple, chilling sound of screaming.

- Chris Warren



# Nepharites & Purgatory

*In the below transcript, The Last Cycle Kult community analyse the nature and role of the Nepharites, the overseers of our torment in Purgatory, and figures of central importance to the oppressive cosmology of the Kult universe.*

## ***LaughingChance***

In recent chat and discussions I have come to realize many of you don't have the Purgatory sourcebook. I thought I'd give you a very brief overview:

### **ELIJAH (Thaumiel)**

One of the oldest and most powerful, he secretly inflicts psychic scars that remain after souls are released he can influence and return to him. Involved in a Nepharite conspiracy. Known as "The Teacher", and even powerful Razides fear him.

### **JONAH (Chagidiel)**

Weaker than Elijah and Cain but ancient. Prefers a false "Guardian Angel" type guise and working in Elysium. Malkuth has a favorable interest in him.

### **ISHMAEL (Sathariel)**

She was once human. Alliance with Elijah. She is a masterful trap springer.

### **NATHAN (Nahemoth)**

Older Nepharite immune to his master's influence of apathy. Hates Malkuth and enjoys crushing the hopes and dreams of the young.

### **CAIN (Golab)**

Almost as powerful as Elijah he has a powerful gaze others cannot stand. He is about 9ft tall and prefers a boning knife or flaying victims. Uneasy alliance with Elijah.

### **EFRAIM (Gamaliel)**

Not very mighty but crafty and underhanded. Prefers sexual pain and torment. Dark dealings with passion conjurers and interested in Elysium. Manipulates Jonah.

### **GABRIEL (Togarini)**

Walks in Elysium like his fallen master. Possesses bodies to do his bidding and never materializes physically in his weakened state. Uses beautiful people, acts like an Angel but is really a dark messiah.

### **MOSES (Samael)**

Not as powerful as Elijah or Cain, but one of the more mighty. Shunned by other Nepharites. Punishes revenge seekers and frequently rewarded by his master. Free hand to work in Elysium. Gang-type violence empowers him.

### **IBRAHIM (Harab-Serap)**

Crusader for God guise. He truly sees himself as doing the work of God in his punishing. Enjoys religious battles. Close ties to Ishmael as he was once Human too.

### **MESHUL (GamichicOTH)**

Unaffected by his master's hunger & thirst powers. He is a cunning planner but not well known outside the Citadel. He is not very powerful, having servants assist him to do his work. Politically influences



matters that make hunger issues worse. Alliance with Nathan.

The Purgatory sourcebook is really designed well. A bit distracting to read since it is designed like a calendar with black and white art and red bloody stains and coloring here and there. I am currently of the opinion everyone should get it if you are a Nephrite lover. But you could work all your days away in Kult without it if need be. It is inspiration and gives a great many examples of Purgatories and different Nephrite agendas and relations to their Death Angel masters. The book also contains a few artifacts and Death school spells.

### ***Underspawn***

I'm starting to think of Nephrites differently; I think more emphasis should be put on the intensely personal connection the Nephrite has with its victim, rather than them just being another leather-clad sicko with a Biblical name. Specifically, I'm thinking of the character Jezebel in the movie Jacob's Ladder. If you haven't seen this film in while, try checking it out from the Kult perspective. Think of Jacob's life with her as his purgatory: the subtle, callous disregard she shows towards his kids and his past life. She really is a menacing character.

I think I'd rather portray a Nephrite as another seemingly normal non-player character, acting a role in the purgatory of its victim. It could take on the role of an invalid parent, an abusive spouse, a sick child, or a suicidal friend. There are worse forms of pain than anything inflicted with a knife. The purgatory exists not as some graphic, blood-soaked hell, but as a simple, unending, quotidian nightmare...a real *living* hell. For example, as a postman in New York, with a bad back and a cruel lover, and only a lifetime of sorrow and confusion to look back on.

It's like Danny Aiello's character quotes in the movie: "If you're clinging to your life, you'll see demons snatching your life away. But if you've made your peace, they're really angels." Doesn't this describe the Nephrites' role perfectly? I think it also introduces more shades of grey to the cosmology, nothing is truly 'good' or 'bad' - it's just a matter of perspective.

So I'm no longer portraying Nephrites as two-dimensional bad guys who want to carve people up for fun - hell, you encounter people like that on the bus in real life. I think their methods should be much more subtle and Machiavellian, and therefore menacing.

### ***Laughing Corpse***

I've read so much about Kult, and I still can't tell Nephrites and Razides apart. What exactly are the differences?

### ***Brynolf***

Ah, yes, I re-watched the Ladder yesterday. Love it! And I agree, this quote really hits the spot when it comes to the Kultish recycling of souls... The more questions you ask and the more you would want to accomplish with your life, the longer will your stay in Inferno/Purgatory be. As for the difference between Razides and Nephrites, I mostly see Razides as officers in the Death Angels' organizations, while Nephrites are more like hired consultants, who sometimes go their own ways... this is not official, though.

### ***LaughingChance***

Razides are like SS Troopers and the Nephrites are like the Gestapo... and that is how I look at it. Some argue that the Razides seem to be higher up in the Infernal Hierarchy but if you read Purgatory you will see that there are a few the mightiest Razides fear and shy away from dating back to the captivity of man and beyond.

### ***Impact***

I always saw them as two different types of creatures: Nephrites work more independently, Razides with a bit more "steering from the top". Sort of like this: The Nephrite is the Captain (General, even) and the Razide is the Lieutenant.. If you want to talk about difficulties to distinguish creatures, take a look at



Desparytes vs. Nephарites.

### ***LaughingChance***

Razides are far more direct or brutal, kind of the full frontal assault... beat now ask questions later... physically punishing souls away and clean more so then mental torture techniques... Nephарites to me lay the traps, ensnare their intended victims, breaking the will of the subject more so with the hands of a surgeon... Razides may make deals teaching others Magic and what have you for a price to be paid later...Nephарites lay traps in spellbooks so a foolish human dooms themselves to it's services. It's kind of a subtle difference. The Razides may seem mightier because of the sheer brutality - where Nephарites are more behind the scenes mentally manipulating and ensnaring victims via craft.

### ***Impact***

They have different (original) motives as well. Nephарites original motives are based upon the fact that they are going to be able to punish/torment sinners. Razides original motives are based upon being guardians so that the sinners cannot escape. The fact that they now can roam more freely, have more selfish motives and generally be more bad-asses on a bigger scale is what makes it so... difficult.

### ***Panopticon***

I would even go so far to say that it is our desire to be punished that creates Nephарites. We already know that humanity has the ability to project it's own fears into reality. Purgatories and Nephарites seem to be a natural extension to this idea.

### ***Underspawn***

Good idea. Kult is about the projection of our subjective fears onto reality, so it makes sense that Nephарites are creations of our own minds. Their origins are kept vague - maybe we created them before the loss of our divinity? As for Desparytes, they don't seem to have much function other than to pad out the cast of creatures in Inferno. I can't think of any use for them other than as scenery.

### ***Panopticon***

I have always played with the idea that Archons are the same, projections of humanity as a collective.

### ***LaughingChance***

I am currently reading a novel edited by Neil Gaiman called Sandman... a collection of short stories inspired by the comics. In one story they use the dream person created by the dreamer is entirely real, as an entity. I think that is a cheap way to go with the Nephарites. I love the fact Humans give them power over themselves but not to be created like a dream.

### ***Panopticon***

For me though that is the whole point. Humanity is the sleeping giant who if wakened will pull down the whole house of cards. Think I mixed a number of my metaphors there, but you get my point. I have never really liked the idea that the metaverse controls the destiny of humanity. In heaps of games humanity's greatest mistakes are always blamed on the interference of greater powers beyond our control. In my own game I try to let humanity take centre stage. It is the Archons that are peripheral. Sure they might like to think they are all powerful but we have the power to destroy or transform them through our collective actions.

Actually, our opinions are not that different. Just that you see Nephарites as a race of opportunists taking advantage of humanity's blindness. If this is the case what did they do prior to this? Were they warped by our desire to be punished or have they always been as they are? If they are a separate race why do they punish, what do they get out of it?

### ***Impact***

Even though it is a nice idea, the idea about Nephарites being created by our desire to be



punished...well...it simply doesn't work. Nepharites and Desparites came out of the shadows and offered their services to Astaroth upon the creation of Inferno. They already existed...

Though Nepharites can still be formed, and by humans at that. This fact I take with thoughts to a quote out of (I think it is ) Good Omens, or Sandman: "*There is no devil, no demon, that could ever grasp the cruelty of humans themselves.*" The devil knows we are way more cruel then anything else can be...so he employs us when he can. (note: this can be used for more "down to earth" games... hmmm)

### **Brynolf**

The Nepharites have a vital role in the Demiurge's machine; after death we are supposed to be tortured (one way or another) until our memories are destroyed, and our MB neutral. Because of this I have a hard time believing that the slumbering divinities inside of us would have any reason, even subconsciously, to attract Nepharites. I like the idea, though.

### **LaughingChance**

Humans before captivity seemed to have really pissed off a lot of races. Many want revenge just or not doesn't matter they hate us and take pleasure in our fallen stature.

### **!mpact**

I actually read it in the rules. Nepharites offered their services to torment humans. Why they want to do this isn't disclosed. Maybe they are just f\*\*\*ked up beings who got an opportunity to work with their favourite type of work.

### **LaughingChance**

In Purgatory the opening bit with Elijah says something about he was around for the captivity of man... so he wasn't a product of Human subconscious... and he is one of the oldest, so there were others...

### **Panopticon**

Byrnolf, I thought subconscious desire to be punished is what purgatories are all about. In all the examples I have seen the purgatory revolves around Non-Player Character seriously unresolved issues (negative MB). I realise this idea of Nepharites is not canon but you would have to agree it would help differentiate them from Razides.

### **Brynolf**

@Panopticon, !mpact & LaughingChance: Both Purgatory and the main rulebook (2nd ed) confirms that it is the humans' own guilty conscience that drags the Nepharites to them, trapping them in "hell". But remember that guilt can't really be "true" guilt, ie guilt that the "true", slumbering, soul is feeling. It is rather something our blind eyes is fooled to feel by the prison guards. And Nepharites are, as far as I know, not *created* by our guilt, but some alien race that felt that there was work to be done in the Machine.

### **Brynolf**

(*In Purgatory there is*) A hint about the nepharites' role in the hierarchy, compared to razides... "Even most razides bow in [Elijah's] presence". The word "even" implies that razides normally are very high on the infernal power-scale, higher than nepharites. But we already knew this, didn't we? And here we have word, that it is possible for humans to turn into nepharites...aha, aha...After re-reading this text, I see no proof of whether the Nepharites was created to fit into the Machine, or if they arrived voluntarily. Well, I don't fully understand what you were aiming at... but Elijah is definitely a nasty bastard.

### **Torb**

My take on where Nephhs come from: the way I've interpreted it (and I'm not at all sure it's even partly right) there are two ways a Nephrite can come into existence:

Either by simply being created by a death angel (it sounds silly even as I'm thinking about it, but if Malkuth can make lictors, I bet my butt that powerful death angels can create nepharites).



Or, (as with certain Chagidiel Nephaphites in The Black Madonna from here on to be known as the three Kalenko women, Yelena and her two daughters Alyona and Katya) by being converted from humans into nephaphites either by having an extreme and distorted lust for revenge over people.

### *Brynolf*

The Death Angels should indeed be able to create, or at least emulate, nephaphites. The purpose of Inferno fits almost too well with the work of nephaphites. What I mean here is, that Inferno would be for torturing people, even if there were no nephaphites around. Thus, the death angels should be able to come up with efficient torturers, ie creatures like nephaphites. This would motivate a cosmology where the Demiurge creates nephaphites. The sourcebooks say different, though, and for some reason I think it's cosy the way it is... But I am not unreasonable.

Ah, but those three could as well be nephaphites originally, on a mission to capture Kalenko in his purgatory. There are however more examples of humans turning into Nephhs than that; Fallen angels, anyone? And it really says in Purgatory, that it is possible to become one. I am not very fond of this idea, though, as I like nephaphites to be somewhat *alien*, or possibly a part of every human; not the human itself, if you get my strange sentences. Humans may turn into angels of vengeance, children of the night or other horrible things, but nephaphites... Well, technically a human may be anything, really, but still...

### *Impact*

2nd Ed. English (for purposes of copyright, I will snip big chunks):

p.194 [snip]...When the illusions crumble in these places, we see into inferno. *It is the home of Death Angels and Razides, where they were once created by evil powers.* ...[/snip]

[snip]...A person with feelings of severe guilt can *more or less unconsciously* get in contact with the Nephaphites, who read his innermost feelings and create a purgatory for him. ...[/snip]

[snip]...*Arcanum Metropoli*; These monsters (Razides) where once created by Astaroth and his angels of damnation to serve in Inferno and to torment the sinners... [/snip]

p.196 [snip]...They (Nephaphites) emerged from the shadows when the flaming halls where created and entered the service of evil... [snip] ... They have the ability to locate a sinner and read their feelings to find their sins. ...[/snip]

[snip]... The origins of Nephaphites are unknown. They lived in the shadow of humanity until the Demiurge enslaved us. Then they stepped forward and offered their services to Astaroth and his cohorts. *A few humans have been turned into Nephaphites but the powers involved are unknown even to the most powerful of tyrants.* ...[/snip]

p.197[snip]...*Arcanum Metropoli*; These beings (Nephaphites) are the princes of pain... They seek souls to torment and find extreme pleasure in feeling the fear and regrets of other beings... [/snip]

This is what I found that is relevant to this topic.

I didn't go through Purgatory at this time, but I *do* remember the line about Razides bowing for him. If my memory don't fail me, I thought I read somewhere that Raides don't bow for *no-one* not even incarnates of Astaroth. It doesn't state so in the 2nd Ed. English though, so if I read it anywhere it was in 1st or 2nd ed. Swedish (which I don't have at hand). I might be wrong about that one though.

I always thought that Razides and Nephaphites had different tasks, hence they don't face each other tat much, that plus the fact that Razides are created within the illusion and Nephaphites where all ready there before... kinda makes my thought pattern go towards the feeling that Razides are lesser in status.



### *!mpact*

Based upon my previous post, I'd like to bring forth a theory:

Astaroth (and his "angels of damnation") created the Razides so that humanity could be tortured until they forgot their previous life, hence would be enabled to return to "living" in Elysium. Just after the Razides were created, the Nepharites stepped out of the shadows and offered to do the same, and Astaroth and his minions went: What the heck, why not! We're all a happy bunch down here, why not some more tormentors, excellent, smashing!

So now you have creatures created by Astaroth who do his bidding, and also creatures OLDER than Razides that torment. This gives an explanation to one thing:

In Purgatory, it is said that Nepharites are slowly building up to revolt. Also, several or only one (can't remember at this moment, gah, need to read Purgatory...Elijah!), Nepharites can scar humans in Inferno, so that they will come back over and over and over again. Thus they increase their power and also get to torment more and more sinners (cos at one time or another, new souls will enter the Purgatory of these Nepharites). Razides don't do this. Yes, Astaroth left so they are acting up and taking as much power as possible.

In this theory though, Razides are like the "mice that dance on the table when the cat is gone". Nepharites are like "rats that come trash the party for the mice". They eat the same stuff, drink the same drinks and dance on the same table, but the rats just came into the house because they saw some free beer and cheese." yes, I like analogies, sorry... Hope this theory makes sense. In the end, its a game, do/think/act out whatever you as a Game Master feels is the best.

### *LaughingChance*

Just thinking out loud here...There are Techrones and Proto-Techrones... The same deal applies to Lictors... in regards to Humans in one way or another... Perhaps the converted Humans should be Proto-Nepharites... Like Ibrahim and Ishmael. The true Nepharites the ancient ones are in a league of their own above Razides.

Razides are "born" in to the Infernal Hierarchy Nepharites that are not created or Humans "promoted" to being a Nephrite... are essentially "contractors". Perhaps the Nepharites were not many and they were duplicated and their race expanded... those may fall under the Razides in the Inferno Ranks but the true Nepharites from the time before are just below Death Angels in status and strength.

### *KingSix*

LC: I agree. But boy are they resentful! Thousands and thousands of years!

### *Brynolf*

Ok, I give up, humans can obviously be turned into nepharites...

But how about this then; All humans in Elysium are not of the same divine species (ie the "race" we belonged to before we were imprisoned). Gods come in many shapes, after all. All of us aren't even gods, some may be angels, Azghouls, demons or other strange things, even Nepharites. This is possible, if we assume that the great "Bang", whirlwind or whatever it was that big daddy D used to blind us all, wasn't very precise in terms of accuracy, so some unintended creatures was "sucked" into Elysium along with us.

### *LaughingChance*

Conspiracies... Well the Lictors have a big conspiracy...and the Nepharites have one too...Death Angels and Archons too...Even Pazuzu doing it's own thing... Is anyone minding the store?!? I like the idea of the Nephrite conspiracy - they seem more likely to succeed then the Lictors in my opinion.

### *Tintomara*

Orginally posted by Brynolf...

*But how about this then; All humans in Elysium are not of the same divine species (ie the "race" we belonged to before we were imprisoned). Gods come in many shapes, after all. All of us aren't even gods, some may be angels, Azghouls, demons or other strange things, even Nepharites.*



Although this is a good idea, I think you got to be careful with it. The PC's are supposed to have been divine monsters, and everyone tries to prevent them from turning back into these monsters. If the PC's are "lesser monsters", you will get a problem to explain why they are imprisoned.

This is a problem especially when the PC's turn out to be lictors or nepharites, in other words the jailors of humanity. Why are they really imprisoned? Why are they not part of the jailor hierarchy? Why can't the other jailors tell that they are Lictors/Nepharites?

Another problem is that if "humanity" would be this heterogene, then the illusion is no longer a matter of keeping a "race" of monsters imprisoned by everybody else. (In the normal scenario nobody likes humans, nobody wants us to be free.) With a more diverse humanity, Kult become a menagerie of different species trapped inside a zoo... and plenty of different species are there as potential allies. This latter scenario easily degenerates into some kind of "metropolis freedom force - featuring demonboy, angelgirl and spiderman". (What's the number one cliché in roleplaying? The heroic team consisting of one elf, one human, one dwarf and a hobbit/thief, comes to my mind.)

I think an Azghoul PC (not knowing that s/he is an Azghoul) could make sense. After all the Azghouls are the old slaves and servants to the humans, the lictors does probably just not think they are worth keeping imprisoned. I don't think a Lictor PC would make sense in the same way, at least not a Lictor who believes him/herself to be a human.

This is just a thought... I'm not at all against non-human PC's. I think the point is that it is *humans* who should be imprisoned, but of course a rebellious Lictor/angel/Nepharite could have been sentenced to imprisonment together with the humans in the Elysium.

### *Fallen Angel*

My view: I think of razides as officers (even generals) in the army, and nepharites as agents in the CIA (or something similar). I think their motives are entirely different and I also think that the nepharites don't really fit into the regular hierarchy. Their task is something to itself -- erasing the memory of humans so that they can be recycled back into the illusion. I therefore has come to the conclusion that the view presented in Purgatory conflicts a bit with my own.

I really like the idea of Jezebel in Jacob's Ladder as being a nepharite -- it would give a good meaning to the movie's ending. I still wonder how this would erase Jacob's memory though -- maybe the torture is taken to another level when he realizes he is dead, or is that the fulfilment of the torture?

I kind of see the entire universe of Kult as a projection of the human mind and all the cogs in the machinery are created by the Demiurge to fit to our neurosis and ambitions etc. Thus nepharites are in a way created by our sense of sin and guilt (razides created out of rage and hate) --- our worst enemies and most powerful jailors. Humanity really only has to conquer its inner demons to awaken and break free. Humanity is the key! I still like the idea of the Demiurge being a human being -- who knows, maybe he has been reincarnated into the illusion or as an awakened, Messiah?

### *Bitpicker*

I see Kult as a completely anthropocentric game. Everything is made the way it is because of humans. Nepharites are beings created exclusively for the purpose of cleansing human souls between incarnations. They haven't got the brains to have a conspiracy, they're not designed for individuality or anything.

I feel that while antagonism among the individuals in Kult (archons, death angels) is ok, the races should be less independent. If you can play one Nepharite against another the game loses some of its horror potential. To me, Purgatory reads like an attempt at cramming even more fishy Bible references into the game. I really don't see a need for that. But that's only my unhumble opinion of course, and it can be disproven by the published material. I tend to disregard that, especially as the published material is self-contradictory so often that it may well be wrong in places where it happens not to contradict itself, too

*Originall yposted by Brynolf...*

*But how about this then: All humans in Elysium are not the same divine species (i.e. The "race" we belonged to before we were imprisoned.*



I came to a similar conclusion to account for the fact that the numbers of humans are increasing, when I think it should have been decreasing slowly by means of extermination (jump into Achlys, anyone?) and ascension, with a set number of humans who had been imprisoned in the first place. Where do the new ones come from?

There are possible answers to that, but I made up the Ephemerides for that reason. The Ephemerides (details available in English on my site at [www.nyboria.de](http://www.nyboria.de)) are a kind of anthropomorphic immune system of the illusion, a kind of fail-safe device when the illusion wears thin in places. The more likely the illusion is to break down, the more Ephemerides swamp the area. They are humans without souls, incapable of breaching the illusion, but they support the consensual reality of the illusion thanks to their presence and disbelief. This is the reason why our slums don't all disappear into Metropolis...

That doesn't help with the creation of Nephарites though. In my recent Kult campaign (the complete log files for which are also on my site) I had a character slowly turn into a Nephарite, too - here it was some kind of 'parasitic infection' thanks to some surgery performed on the character in a purgatory. It was a way for the original Nephарite to ensure his control over his intended victim even though the PCs were attacking the victim's purgatory from within...

### ***LaughingChance***

This has been provided for. Remember time and history is not always what it is said to be and distortions occur. Names may survive in one format or another but the truth has been lost to the Illusion. So "fishy" Bible references and such matters are a symptom of that in the game. I am not sure I am expressing myself well enough in making my point... but I hope you get what I am after.

I enjoy having things come up the PCs may feel are familiar to them to have it blow up in their faces. False rescuers and what not... that is a crucial part to the PCs realizing all they know is a lie. So I am all for the "fishy" references and name dropping. It fits the big picture to me.

@Bitpicker: Not designed for individuality?!? I think to make the Illusion work in all it's parts you need distractions so humans don't gain any focus. Lictors are full of individuality... taking on different roles and guises... they have a conspiracy going... Nephарites as well... to be adaptable you need some personality. All the Archons and Death Angels have varying personalities and interests... Why would Nephарites be any different. I gather they are contractors working for the Infernal order... as old if not older than humanity...

Some beings maybe single minded and focused but they are individuals at the end of the day perhaps one of the exceptions are the Servilants who it says have no self preservation or motivation other than their Lictors will and orders. Hmmm kind of a zombie-esque throw back to "evil" clerics in D&D with zombie servants.

Animalistic intelligences even have personality. Look at the personality in peoples pets for example. Why would Nephарites or other hosts of horror be any different or lesser? Perhaps with the DU in charge they didn't dare... but now it is a free for all... as the Illusion crumbles.

### ***Brynolf***

@Tintomara: You're right. The non-humans inhabiting Elysium should be very restricted, but if used in moderate proportions, I think the idea is great. I am more or less building a whole campaign around it (it's hard to keep it as restricted as it should be, but...).

@Robin: So you're the Nyboria guy! I read your articles a while ago, and I really liked them. I just wanted to say that another reason why the population is growing, might be that Inferno is emptying, both when it comes to sinners, and employees. It is the last cycle after all, and many eyes are turned on Elysium...

### ***Bitpicker***

@Laughing Chance: I'm not saying the Nephарites might not be different from each other, they are, in fact, they are each individually adapted (or adaptable) to their human 'host'. But I don't give them human-like brains. I think it takes a lot of horror out of the game (and a lot of sense and meaning out of actual religion)



when everyone and their supernatural mother are motivated exactly by what motivates humans. A universe governed by good and evil, base human motivations being behind everything even non-humans do, that is cheap. Nepharites having a conspiracy is just ugly humans dressed in leather and plastic. The lictors have a bit of an excuse for a human-like personality as they have been supposed to pose as humans most of the time, but all the others don't have the same excuse. Conspiracies, hunger for power, mutual animosities, just make them understandable and human-like. I want the completely alien.

The death angels and archons embody principles which are, as a matter of fact, antagonistic. They are much more than just their anthropomorphic images, and while we seem to see intelligent individuals plotting against each other, they are just as much forces of super-nature grating against each other because that is what they do. Like water and fire are opposed without actual malice or intent, they are, too.

I prefer to see the typical human fallacies and features as exclusive to them. They may be part or weak shadow of why humanity was imprisoned in the first place. If Nepharites et al turn out to be the same type of power-hungry plotters as the humans are, why isn't it them who are imprisoned?

### ***Elminster2001***

I've always thought that Nepharite are just another breed of children of night, that ended up serving Hell.

### ***LaughingChance***

Perhaps they are imprisoned as well? Lictors fates tied to our own all this time, the Nepharites too... Razides created just for that sole purpose... even the Archons and Death Angels have their interests and time spent keeping us at bay (Humankind)... They aren't hanging out surfing the rings of Saturn... they are "compelled" for various reasons to baby-sit us... where is their "free will" they are "prisoners to Humankind" a good reason to kick us while we are down, take delight in punishing us... resenting us... they are just as much prisoners as Humans in my view.

It's not like there are other rogue Nepharites or something roaming around unemployed. It seems that whole races are in service to the Machine, nicht wahr? Humans are on the bottom rung because we were/are that much more dangerous... the others may have positions via acceptable levels of risk to the Demiurge and his plans and that of the others who helped enslave us to the Illusion.

I like to entertain that Human-like traits in the Infernal and Archonic Hosts are just Human perception and level of under-standing. With Lictors I have never been so exact that it needed to make sense to the PCs they have plans and duties to fill that are beyond Human comprehension and disguised as well... so any patterns that seem Human like is part of our limitations currently.

### ***Fallen Angel***

*Originally posted by Bitpicker...*

*I came to a similar conclusion to account for the fact that the numbers of humans are increasing, when I think it should have been decreasing slowly by means of extermination (jump into Achlys, anyone?) and ascension, with a set number of humans who had been imprisoned in the first place. Where do the new ones come from?*

The growing number of humans is due to Inferno being emptied of souls. The core book states this quite clearly I think. Astaroth and the Angels of Death need them as soldiers in Elysium. I also think that some humans might not be real humans but rather jailors in disguise and fallen angels and such, whom at first seems human but if you see through the illusions they're really not. I think all REAL human beings are members of the same divine race. Any other option takes the meaning of the cosmology concept away in my opinion, as Tintomara has already said.

*Originally posted by Bitpicker...*

*I think it takes a lot of horror out of the game (and a lot of sense and meaning out of actual religion) when everyone and their supernatural mother are motivated exactly by what motivates humans. A universe governed by good and evil, base human motivations being behind everything even non-humans do, that is cheap. [...] I want the completely alien.*

I have a totally different approach to this. Like you stated earlier I see Kult as anthropocentric. From this follows that everything is created around humanity. The human mind is the basis from which everything



has taken form.

I too think The Angels of Death and Archons represents principles rather than individuals, but these are fundamental basic human principles really. We might not always recognise them for what they are, but they really are archetypal human desires. It's the same forces that work the illusion that also work the human mind (conscious and unconscious).

The creatures of "heaven and hell" are created from human conceptions of fear, hate, morbidity, sadism, hunger for power and control etc. That is why they also take on certain human qualities and are not completely alien after all. They are really not much more than mirror images. This I think explains the conspiracies among them while also maintaining the fact that humanity is the center of it all.

That said I don't like Purgatory too much either because I see the Nepharites as based on other human qualities than hunger for power. Power to them is something different. Power to them is having a human souls pain and destiny totally within their grasp – this is what they seek to achieve. This is why they are so well suited to do their job. I don't have anything in principle against power struggles in hell, they are like the conflicts of motives in our own minds, but I think these struggles are more the game of the higher ranking Razides and other generals and that they generally don't interest most Nepharites that much.

### **Bitpicker**

That is fine if you take such human motivations as you find in the *imprisoned* humans to be normal human motivation; whereas I think even the 'basic' human urges are part of the framework of the illusion, an animal part married to the higher human self and governing (suppressing) it. We cannot gauge what an real, awakened human is like just from looking at the inmates of the Illusion.

An inmate of the illusion can deal with hate, terror, lust... I'm trying to find something on the other side which the imprisoned human mind cannot hope to deal with either way (i. e. Awakened humans or their antagonists). I keep things incomprehensible for that reason, and conspiracies are too easy to comprehend for my tastes.

### **Tintomara**

I sometimes use "mechanical dolls" for the same purpose. You'll have to see through the illusions to see the cogs and springs moving inside their "flesh" and to see their cracked plastic skin. Some of them are "walking on railways", always repeating the same tasks. They originally come from a number of nightmares I had when I was in between 5 to 7 years old. I think they only differ from Ephemeredes in that they are mechanical. Some low-ranked Lictors are assigned to repair and take care of "wind up" the dolls, usually such service is carried out in supermarkets.

I think of nepharites as being big individualistic exo-parasites, that is they don't need company, have no real need to plot against each other... but I also see them as highly "territorial". I think they are in need of suffering, just like a shadow is in need of light. If all lights go out, there are no individual shadows, just a compact darkness.

To say this in other words: I think a Nephrite is destroyed/killed if it ever gets trapped within an area of non-suffering, I don't even think they'll have time to escape. If suffering ceases, they cease as well... and that's a good reason to fight over the resource you are in need of. In this case the "resource" is suffering people, so I think nepharites may plot against each other to gain control over suffering souls, and perhaps over certain areas with lots of misery.

But I don't think they conspire against anyone to gain higher "social status", they simply have no use of status. I think they can be fascinated, mesmerized and exalted. I sometimes imagine nepharites are attracted by expressionistic art reminding about suffering, and I like to think that they have some weird aesthetic taste. What they don't experience is interest in any other individual, other than as competition/danger or a resource. They have a self preservation, but they don't fear anything. I think they experience some kind of "pain" instead of fear when their existence is in danger (this is how I think bacteria experience danger).

In one way, I think of them as flies on a cadaver. The life of a fly often goes something like this: Starvation, avoiding birds. Smell of a cadaver! Ten thousand other flies has already found the cadaver.



Gotta breed as fast as possible while the cadaver is still there! Breeding, eating, breeding. Oops, no more cadaver! More starvation, avoiding birds. (Believe it or not, but flies can be quite territorial if their "cadaver" is small.)

One suffering human may not be enough to sustain several nepharites, perhaps nepharites sometimes fight over suffering souls. Perhaps nepharites compete in such way that the one who can cause most agony to a soul, will receive most of the suffering. Perhaps there isn't enough suffering for both, so only the one who got most out of the humans will stay with it. This way a human soul could "select" its tormentor, by being more responsible to him/her/it.

### ***Laughing Corpse***

These creatures all "survive" through human suffering after death right? This got me to thinking how the Lore of Death and the Lore of Dreams seem tailor made to escape the Illusion to a great degree and especially to escape Death. One lets you escape to the Dream and the other can grant eternal youth. Nepharites and Razides surely aren't happy about that...or about Children of the Night that get immortality.

### ***Tintomara***

*Originally posted by Elminster2001...*

*I've always thought that Nepharite are just another breed of children of night, that ended up serving Hell...*

Yes, there are similarities... in many ways I think of them as Children, but I still think Nepharites are distinctively different.

Lictors and others do not appear to hunt Nepharites down, which suggest that they cannot awaken in the human sense. Also, it seems that becoming a Nephrite requires that some really powerful creature (like a Death Angel or something) is involved. As !mpact has pointed out, nepharites seem to have existed before the imprisonment of humanity.

*Originally posted by Laughing Corpse...*

*These creatures all "survive" through human suffering after death right?*

I think so, at least nepharites. Or perhaps they are just very, very bored.

### ***Brynnolf***

*Originally posted by Tintomara...*

*Lictors and other do not appear to hunt Nepharites down, which suggest that they cannot awaken in the human sense.*

Why should a Lictor hunt nepharites, who in fact have important roles in the machine? As long as the nepharites don't endanger the safety of Elysium, Lictors wouldn't care about them. If, however, a Nephrite doesn't do its job very well, say it lets victims escape or such, it might be considered an indirect threat.

### ***!mpact***

Apart from the inevitable Game Master who have done it, there is actually only ONE that has escaped the grasps of the Nepharites. He is mentioned in Swedish 2nd ed. He is called "HeatSeeker" and is supposed to have worked for a Nephrite once as a "Skarprättare" (sort of an executioner, I couldn't find a better translation but it isn't exactly translated). Anyone who has access to the Swe. 2nd.ed corebook can probably give better info on this, but it is mentioned only briefly. Heatseeker also appears on the Swedish GM screen (don't know if it is the same screen-image on English version) and is the guy with the long, dark hair, one eye seems red, the other seems green. And he holds a freakish sword.

Now, isn't that interesting? Executioners of Nepharites? It once made me create a personal executioner for Astaroth, called Mephisto (yes, I was young, but it fits!)

### ***Brynnolf***



Heatseeker didn't work for Serenade (the Nephrite), but for the master of them both, which could be almost anyone, really, Astaroth a Death Angel, a Razide, a Nephrite or someone else. According to what we more or less agree on here, nepharites don't have very much use for private assassins.

### ***Elminster2001***

I was thinking, can it be that Nephrite are menomated humans? Maybe the original ones where so "born", and there are ways to cripple a human in this form. The Demiurge didn't see them as a menace, and so did not imprison them, and they hate the rest of humanity.

### ***Tintomara***

I thought Heatseeker *was* a Nephrite?

*Originally posted by Elminster2001...*

*...can it be that Nephrite are menomated humans?*

Crippled Gods? I like the idea, but I think of them more like "shadows" of the Awakened humanity. Something that was taken away from us, and something that we can be turned into. Not very different from the "shadow" that we cleanse away from our souls when we attain an extreme mental balance, but somehow different anyway.

I think nepharites fear the awakening of humans, because I think whenever a human awakens, one Nephrite "merges" with that human's soul and loses its identity. And I think they cannot exist outside suffering. I find it hard to describe them any better... but the "crippled gods" theory is a good one. If I hadn't already got one theory, I would adopt it.

### ***Broken Doll***

Good idea Tintomara. Hmm... How about this:

The Nephrites are the remaining shadow of humans who have been utterly destroyed, however their shadow is allowed to remain to serve as cleansers of the human mind through purgatories. This would in theory make it possible to "bring them back" through the creation of a "new" light shadow, a light side that is stripped away when a human becomes a Nephrite. That would also explain their very good understanding of human fear and pain.

### ***Underspawn***

...and also answer the question of what becomes of you should you destroy your shadow.

### ***Brynolf***

I like that idea! But I think it kind of conflicts with the light/dark shadow-thing. The question of which idea is the best needs a little thinking. Hmm, maybe it doesn't conflict... well, I'll keep thinking anyway... hmmm.

### ***Underspawn***

You merge with your light or dark shadow to become Awakened. If you were to destroy your shadow before you reached the awakening stage, Nephrite-ism sounds like a fairly logical fate.

### ***Broken Doll***

I'm with Spawny on this one... Although none of my players (nor their characters) are anywhere near enlightenment.

### ***KingSix***

I don't think that the Nephrites should be the remaining shadow of humans that have been utterly destroyed. This because there are only a handful of humans that have been destroyed and put to rest in the city of the dead. (1st ed)



In that case I like the thought that Nephарites are shadows of our true nature better.

### **Brynolf**

Originally posted by Underspawn...

*You merge with your light or dark shadow to become Awakened. If you were to destroy your shadow before you reached the awakening stage, Nephарite-ism sounds like a fairly logical fate...*

Yes, I realised that, too. It makes sense, I think.

@Kingsix: The city of the dead is in fact full of tombs, where (probably) humans that have died both before and after the age of Elysium rest. I think there could be enough dead humans to cover the number of Nephарites.

### **KingSix**

I don't agree with you. The human race was immortal before the imprisonment, and still is. However death has become a "gate to other existences" - and to erase our memories to keep us imprisoned. In the chapter beyond death we are also given a hint that not many human beings have been destroyed. It is not even obvious that death existed before the imprisonment of man.

"Only a handful have been wiped out during the past millennia. It takes much more than death to obliterate a human being." (p210 1st edition)

### **Brynolf**

Hmm, you're right. But on the other hand, why have a City of the Dead, if humans don't die? What are all those tombs for?

### **Underspawn**

Maybe they are the resting places of our past selves, and also our memories? Though perhaps the Mirror Halls and Memory Banks cover those. Humans are hard to kill, and death may only be an illusion, but, as the 1st ed suggests, we *can* be destroyed - if only at a rate of a few souls per millennium. The multitude of tombs to be seen in the City of the Dead could be an intriguing hint at just how old humanity is.

### **KingSix**

Good point! I agree that is a very interesting point.

### **LaughingChance**

Why? I have no problem with there being other Gods or Dieties in Metropolis. Why does it always need to come down to humans? It just seems so narrow minded.

### **Impact**

Originally posted by Tintomara...

*I thought Heatseeker was a nephарite?*

No, it is clearly stated that he is wanted by a Nephарite (whether that was Serenade or whomever - Serenade is actually a Desparyte, and not a Nephарite, but there is confusion about that one anyways - I do not remember) because he has escaped his own purgatory. Nephарites don't end up in purgatories, because they create them. Which brings another couple of interesting thing up:

How much power does a Nephарite have in a purgatory? Does a Nephарites powers differ depending on whether the purgatory is created by him/her/it? Can Nephарites enter any purgatories at will? *IF* there is plotting and enmity to a bigger extent between Nephарites, do they try to openly challenge each other inside Purgatories?

And if so, what is the consequences for humans trapped in a purgatory in which two Nephарites are battling each other? (Whether it is physical or mental battle.) Just some thoughts that came up. This is of course moot points to discuss if you don't think Nephарites have a need to work against each other for more "power".



Even though this is an interesting topic, and everyone's opinion is their own, I still don't see why Nepharites have to be something created by or for Humanity. Why can't they have existed before? Why can't they have been unknown to humanity? I like the fact that there are some unknown things about Kult.

### ***KingSix***

The only reference I have seen mentioning Heatseeker is the second Swedish edition of Kult. (p174) It is never even said that Heatseeker was human. He was raised to become the foremost assassin of inferno. He was trained to slay humans and bring their souls to hell. He was not seeking death alone, but the poetry of death, a striving that finally made him fall from the grace of his master. He was thrown from the highest of thrones into a burning abyss where he was imprisoned by his former servants, the Nepharites. He wasn't a Nephrite, but he was even more powerful.

Nepharites are not the only ones that create purgatories. That can be done by the sinner. A character with enough guilt can create his own purgatory. (example: Elizabeth Seymour in Fallen Angels) It is also hinted in the 2nd Swedish edition that the nepharites was before the imprisonment: "They stepped forward from the shadows when the flaming halls were created and came in the survive of evil." However, in the 1st US it is stated that they were created as tormentors.

### ***Brynolf***

Originally posted by *!mpact...*

*What is the consequences for humans trapped in a purgatory in which two Nepharites are battling each other? (Whether it is physical or mental battle.)*

Wow! This is really a neat idea! Sadly, it doesn't fit very well with the "shadow"- and "non-conspiracy" nepharites we have discussed here. Your idea is, however, a good reason to let the nepharites be more as they really are described in the sourcebooks. Hey, you can't have it all...

### ***Tintomara***

I can't see why this wouldn't fit just as well with a "non-conspiracy shadow-style" Nephrite? Nepharites battling each others for the power over a single human does not imply that Nepharites are power hungry conspirators. It is fully possible that nepharites compete for individual humans, but not for power over other nepharites. Do they even have a hierarchy?

About what happens with the human trapped in between two battling nepharites, here is one more of my animal analogies...

Ever seen an "Ichneumon fly"? (*parasitstekel* in Swedish, it's not a "real" fly). They find a caterpillar, lay an egg inside the caterpillar, the egg hatches while the caterpillar is still alive and the little "fly" larvae starts eating the caterpillar from the inside. If two "flies" infect the same caterpillar, both larvae will die from starvation (unless one larvae kill the other larvae). There isn't enough caterpillar for both, so the "flies" avoid each other. Occasionally they end up two together in the same host, but this doesn't matter to the caterpillar. It will die anyway.

I don't think a human will notice if two nepharites do battle over it, because the results are the same: pain, torment and loss of memory.

### ***LaughingChance***

I think you can safely assume there is some sort of order... or Nephrite Hierarchy from Purgatory. Even if it is a might makes right or a Death Angels favorite son type deal. Some are more feared than others, some need help carrying out their tasks and plans. There are Group Purgatories... if there is any fighting going on it would be over that and not just one puny Human Soul...

### ***Brynolf***

Originally posted by *Tintomara...*

*I can't see why this wouldn't fit just as well with a "non-conspiracy shadow-style" nephrite?*



I meant that if nepharites are born out of the darkness (=shadow) of each individual human soul, they should be quite attached to that specific individual, and not have anything to do with other souls, and no interest in climbing the hierarchy ladder.

### *LaughingChance*

That is excellent reasoning and I agree. The darkness/guilt and what not in the Human souls attracts a Nephrite in my opinion... but besides the Proto-Nephrites that are created the others were to me their own race entirely. If they were once Humans to start with it was long, long ago and they evolved quite differently from Humanity as we know it... game-wise. Damn this is a good thread!

### *Stirner*

Reading all the thread took me a while, but hey! Good points! So I'll throw in my two cents. In my cosmology, there are three kinds of Nephrites:

The *Bechorim* (primigen) - are like Elijah and many of those described in Purgatory: ancient as man captivity. They are called the Sons of the Seventh Day. When our captivity was complete and Demiurgos retired in his citadel, Astaroth decided to create something on his own. They spawned from Astaroth's desire to make something at his own image, like Demiurgos did with Men. But Astaroth had nothing like him, so he spawned the Bechorim, twisted and broken images of man. They are the masters of the Purgatories in Inferno, and usually don't come out often. They loathe humanity not just because it's imprisoned and weak, but also because they are its imperfect reflection.

The *Shakah* (those who forgot): Humans who have become Nephrites. They can be as ancient as thousand of years ago or recently transformed. Usually they enacted pacts with dark powers to become Nephrites, or their sheer vileness attracted a Bechor, or even a Death Angel, who has converted them in Nephrites through a Torment Palimpsest (the grid of purgatories who pierce a Nephrite's flesh). They hate humanity because they know that with their transformation as Nephrites, have forever lost their own possibility to awaken, thus being fooled by Inferno.

Last but not least: the *Vezarim* (guilties): They are called from Inferno when one's sense of guilt, or his own sins, create a Purgatory in Inferno. They are just a reflection of that single man's guilt or vileness, just like a Nephrite was a distorted reflection of man created by Astaroth vileness. This means the Vezarim are *unconsciously created by a guilty human*, one with a low MB, of course. They come free with his Purgatory, but even once they purged the soul, they remain in Inferno, alleging to an Angel of Death or simply operating mass purgatories. They hate humanity because they feel like humans created them as wrecked creatures, and they feel the urge to wreck them in return.

That's what I made to fit in my cosmology, I hope you like it.

### *Impact*

Interesting, Stirner. Very nice idea. The one thing I don't like is that Astaroth created the first ones, but I have my point since before in this topic. Just on a note for you people, Astaroth have created (with a little help) two angelic choirs (well, they are Infernal, since they work for A. but it will all be explained in Host.). This might explain why I don't feel tempted to have Astaroth fix up new Nephrites... he all ready has loads of creations of his own. Anyways, still an interesting idea Stirner, with "types" of Nephrites.

### *Brynolf*

Nice! But I'm not sure if I'd call all those three nephrites. If nephrites can have such different backgrounds, then what is it really that defines one? Torture? Well, many creatures from the other side practice that.

I'm not sure yet of where I stand in this debate, either the "they came out of the dark, and offered Astaroth their services", or "They are the twisted remains of a human "shadow"..." hmm, I'll have to keep thinking as usual...



### ***Tintomara***

I think several different kinds of nepharites can be a quite good idea. At least it doesn't interfere with the official rules.

According to daVinci in the Swedish 2nd ed, the nepharites are so diverse that they seem not to have anything in common, besides that they resemble humans and bring sinners into inferno to be tormented. And then you have the Despartytes... I wouldn't be able to tell the difference between a Despartyte and a Nephrite even if they would come for me. Perhaps Despartytes are a special breed of Nephrites?

### ***!Impact***

#### **Despartyte vs. Nephrite:**

A Nephrite for me, is a creature who's purpose (at least in this game) is to punish human(s) until the previous life is forgotten. Nephrites have a very defined task to perform. Nephrites also differ greatly in their look, as pointed out by Tintomara.

Despartytes (for me) on the other hand, are creatures that have more in common with each other on a pure visual level. Despartytes are in fact the ones with spikes and masks (a look that is traditionally thought to be bestowed on Nephrites, look in your core book once again and read the descriptions on Nephrites and realize that they don't always wear masks and sport spikes on their head a la Pinhead.)

When it comes down to the tasks of the Despartytes, it gets a bit more difficult though. My personal approach to this is that I see Despartytes and Nephrites as very similar creatures, possibly with similar or same origins, but with the fundamental difference that Nephrites now work for Hell (shortened down, you know what I mean) whilst Despartytes are more "freelancers". This is my personal approach/view on them though (apart from the descriptions of them). You don't have to do like I do...

### ***Stirner***

For me, a Nephrite is someone gone totally over pain and pleasure, whose mind is totally alien from man's. The fact is not that he's tortured, but that he is tortured AND delighted. A Nephrite thought is totally impossible to understand. This is the main difference, for me between a Nephrite and a Purgatide. The latter is being tortured, he knows it and suffers. Not so the nephrite. He IS tortured, but he has brought his mind over the limit.

(As for Nephrites and Despartytes) The main physical difference is the mask and the robe, just as !Impact wrote. On the mental side, I'd suggest that the Nephrites are born out of guilt, and they feed on it, the Despartytes are born out of human fears, and they feed on it. They have no Primigens, they have origins from human fears.

I have also made particular Despartytes who represent particular ancestral phobias, like claustrophobia and arachnophobia, but this would take more space to write.

### ***KingSix***

I have also gotten the impression that Despartytes are born from human misery and despair. In a sense they could be somebody's worst nightmare come true.

### ***LaughingChance***

I'm interested in how you folks think of and explain Elizabeth in Fallen Angels? Was she in fact a proto-Nephrite?

### ***KingSix***

I think you could call her a Proto-Nephrite although they call her an Avenging Angel in the adventure. Not to be mistaken for Samael's avenging angels from LoD. The text states that her new form is very close to a Nephrite. I think that if she can be called a proto-Nephrite the PCs could too as they are also turned into something akin to Nephrites: Children of Inferno

### ***LaughingChance***

What makes a Nephrite a Nephrite? In Elizabeth's case she desired to punish and lash out at those she



considered guilty the players are not really inclined that way in my minds eye. She is evolving in her desire, the PCs really aren't. Nepharites enjoy their work and make themselves stronger from it (if they are skilful enough) in my opinion, but the PCs don't fit that bit. They are more like mutated Purgatides or something in essence in Fallen Angels. Elizabeth is a different story. She wants to get even and so forth.

I remember reading something in the US 1st Edition about in times of stress, shock and so forth... the Illusion as we know can crumble locally for the PC. The example they gave was "corpses get up and menace the PC". The PC is actually using powers now forgotten and not controlled creating an hallucination of terror. The delusions of others can effect the illusions version of reality for other PCs/NPCs as well.

The character can disbelieve it (Ego) and dissolve it away out of existence. I think in the same section it talked about the body can change temporarily growing natural weapons such as tentacles and claws and so on as MB lowers. But how far does it go? Obviously in Elizabeth's case in Fallen Angels she became a Nepharite like being... but not a true Nepharite. I have to think and I prefer to think that Nepharites are an entirely different race. It'd be kind of cool if they were a dark shadow of humanity's existence but they aren't. So I'd have to say that the PCs in Fallen Angels are not changed of their own will to punish.

### *KingSix*

Also in Elizabeth's case her father has tried to create his own punisher with the help of the Death magic Boorman taught him. If that hadn't happened she might not have become what she became. I would say probably not become this avenging angel.

### *Brynolf*

Another thought on Inferno... In theory, it would be enough to let Inferno be our only prison. Letting humanity be tortured for all eternity, and never get a hold of any thoughts that could lead to awakening would be a great way to keep them away from the truth, right? Well, maybe the answer is that, like in the Matrix, if humanity don't get fooled by a world where all is happy and fine, then, in the case of eternal Inferno, they will eventually get so enraged (or another powerful feeling) over their situation, that they will rise against the torturers, regain more and more power, and eventually awaken...

### *Underspawn*

Yes. as revealed by Agent Smith in the first movie, the Matrix cannot be a land of perpetual happiness, because we will reject it. Likewise, our prison cannot be a place where there is nothing but suffering, because it would be simple to rebel against that too. We must be allowed our free will. It is our ability to choose (and usually choose wrong) that keeps us in this prison without walls. None are more hopelessly enslaved than those who falsely believe they are free.

### *LaughingChance*

I never paid all that much attention to the difference [*between Nepharites & Desparytes*] since it is not really an area of the cosmology I use to often. However, when you put it like that, it clearly conforms my opinion on the matter in agreement with your own. Excellent.

PS - I don't feel Nepharites are created from thin air. I like to think of them as another race. Although it is terrifying to think we could do that to ourselves I find it more of a menace that others are out there...we know nothing about enjoying an opportunity to kick us while we are down... It is icing on the cake cosmology-wise.

As Fallen Angel said... Inferno is losing more and more souls one of the reasons Nepharites and Razides are venturing forth to claim and capture victims/clients. It works for me... without the Demiurge in place a lot of things are slipping as well and humans are being dumped back into the Illusion at a much quicker rate as a quick fix to me. On the medical science side of things people are living longer (Malkuth?) and getting a greater and greater chance to realize things aren't right.

### *Zara2stra*



I think that the fact that people are living longer doesn't mean that they will realise anything. Some people are cheating death for centuries and still don't know the truth. The fact of longer life-expectancy means only that people's ties to their mortal shells are strengthening - as is their craving for anything material - It might actually mean that it is another way to chain humans to illusion.

### *Demorney*

One thing I don't understand - if you take a look at the overall population numbers' increase - how can this be when we're all reborn and exist right from the start? Thus the number of souls should be equal or decreasing (as some are drawn into purgatory or enlightened). Can it be explained with the non-existence of time? Which would mean there are still 'fresh' human beings arriving here in this reality for the first time...

### *Zara2stra*

There is a possibility of breeding a fresh awakened human (through magic, I think it was mentioned in the rulebook) and I also suspect that there are many other circumstances on which it can happen - but the main problem I think is that after the Demiurge has gone missing the rotation in purgatories must be a lot faster - which leads us back to the original theme - Nepharites

### *Brynolf*

All the homo sapiens on the planet isn't human. Some are forgotten gods like Baal Reshef, some are servants to archons or other entities. Also remember that many humans has a dark/light shadow, who probably looks and acts like a human, further increasing the population. Furthermore, Bitpicker had an idea that many of the "new" humans are just walking illusions, created by lictors(?) to strengthen the control over us. And, as we know, Inferno is emptying.

### *Brynolf*

Hey, who told you we were six billion ppl on Earth, anyway? The lictors probably have something to gain by saying so. Earth might as well be inhabited by you, your wife and some monstrous rabbits in the backyard. The people you meet are just lictors and their servants, and the planet isn't any bigger than your block. Don't believe everything you hear :D

### *LaughingChance*

I have to differ with you Z. The longer we live the greater and longer we can travel the light/dark road, the more experienced we are in the Illusion, the more desperate we become. Mental illness and biological illness changes the person also. But like the Oracle, who believes them?

### *Zara2stra*

Oh, come on LC, how many of those who live for, let's say 80 years, start to walk either path, they rather become grannies and grandpas whose MB is as close to 0 as it is possible, and after death they loose it all. I think that people treading the path to awakening usually have some sort of emotion which drives them to it, and all those older people give a shit only for their momentary survival, warm bed and some grandchildren... Would it be really worth risking and involving valuable resources for the agents of Malkuth to invest in something that slow and dependant on the nature of an imprisoned human? I doubt it.

You say that they become desperate - of course! But they cling to their shells - they are enchanted with the world of their five senses which year by year begin to fade, and they miss it. Oh, how they miss the smells, views, sounds... So the only thing they're interested in is returning to their youth when they were beautiful, singing cattle led by a deceiving shepherd.

That's why the cities are the main aim of Malkuth - life there is fast, full of emotions and usually very short, but exactly that imposes a different kind of survival instincts on people, that which lead them finally to death or one of the paths.



But as usual, that's only my opinion :)

### *LaughingChance*

First of all PCs are not regular people in the game setting...they are that something special good or bad that falls into the odd places and strange events... PCs at an advanced age will sell their souls for youth, power or promises real or false... Humans that are afraid to die may cling to their shells as you delicately put it... becoming revenants, offer themselves to children of the night and so forth looking for a way to cheat fate... anyhow... as Humans grow older and suffer maladies they are more likely to see cracks in the Illusion I can't see you debating that. Hospices, hospitals, old persons homes and such abuse by younger family members and sheer frustration at their current state of life are all certainly factors on MB to me... maybe they even become forgotten... homeless... falling into other states of mind or victims to forces that be with no one to help... Our souls are eternal so whether a 90 year old shell or a 20 year old shell Nephrites and such don't care, it may not be a factor at all to them... it is a soul. To me the older a person is they more time to repent or greater time to be wicked and feel guilty.

Actually I see the opposite. They forget about their own survival, existing day after day, neglecting themselves, forgetting to eat and bathe and so forth. If cared for you have medications affecting them... Look at cultures around the world where people are living past 100 years: if a person started on the light road leading a good life, meditating and such they could get quite far...

The longer Humans live the greater the threat to the Illusion period. Maybe it is a reason for wars in the Illusion to keep Humanity from advancing further... keep killing them off and keep them stupid... with the Illusion breaking down... and people getting wiser as a populace just keep finding ways to kill them off like cancers and new diseases... so there are more people around then ever before at the same time now... Since most have stopped believing in heaven and hell... wait time is at an all time minimum to start again...

Perhaps the Illusion wasn't designed to have so many Human souls within it at the same time and place... heh heh heh.

### *Zara2stra*

Hmm, maybe you are right...to some extent that is :) . I agree with you that if we put older people as a players that may be so. The main difference may be that I'm not living in a big city (nor a city to be precise) and most older people in my surroundings are rather the way in my above post. I'm sure that there is plenty of nasty things going just behind the curtain (as shown in Twin Peaks for example) But remember that what you are talking about are extremes, and although the border is constantly moving extremes are usually eliminated. The question is if we take the extremes you talk about as dominating, if so, then there's nothing peculiar in the extreme - thus it stops being extreme.

If I want the players to be shocked then they must see something that they did not expect, and if it is all at once with everything they encounter, then it stops being shocking.

### *Tintomara*

Only problem is that humans don't grow any older. Most humans in the "civilized" world die somewhere in between 50 and 60, and the rest dies somewhere in between 80 and 90 years. Rumours speak about 120 yrs old humans, but none of these "superhumans" have become old by the use of medication (and it remains to be proven that any human have passed 113 yrs of age). So humans become about 90 yrs old today, but can find 90 yrs old human fossils from the Palaeolithic age as well.

Conclusion: Humans do not grow older today than under the stone age (but they grow older today than they did around the middle ages).

### *Brynolf*

How our torturers actually do it...

I came up with this idea in another thread, but this is probably where it belongs the most.

All memories get "attached" to the immortal soul, and can never truly be erased (if Achlys or Coatlicue



keep away from your mind, that is). What happens in Inferno is that the Nepharites and their little helpers simply use the same phenomenon that makes "living" humans repress bad memories. They let us relive our lives again and again, but with details drastically changed in twisted, perverted and "guilting" ways. The Nepharite (or whoever it is) takes it one scene at a time. After a while all that remains of that scene in our mind is a pulp of pure guilt and horror, that we prefer to avoid.

In short, they force us to associate every little memory we have collected during our recent time in Elysium with guilt or something bad, horrible, irrational or generally unthinkable. That's why the purging in Inferno takes such long time; we tend to have quite a lot of memories that must be tainted and repressed.

Ok, this is some unfinished thoughts, but the general idea fits nicely into the Kultiverse. If there isn't anything I haven't thought about...

### **Zara2stra**

Hmm, that seems quite convincing but I doubt that by multiplying our guilt the Nepharites are purging us... that way we would rather come back with more angst than before and thus with lower MB. I think that the system for purging souls was a little bit different when everything was still in order, but when Astaroth left Inferno to search for the Demiurge purging souls also changed - Nepharites could succumb to their dark craving for suffering. I still think that torture by itself cannot bring our balance back to 0.

### **Underspawn**

I would say that is the exact point of it - to increase the guilt and shame until the human mind reaches breaking point. Consider what IMO is one of the best purgatories we've read about: the Purgatory of Jeanette Beauvois (*Shattered Lives - The Abyss*). Her purgatory, like all Purgatories, is tailor-made for her based on the 'sins' of her life: promiscuous sex, paternal abuse and drug abuse, the things which caused her the most pain and eventually killed her.

Now, Jeanette can only forget her past life when she lets go of her memories and *willingly* leaves the purgatory. She will not escape until she has ceased to care about everything that once constituted her life. Thus, she must discard it. What other methods are there of achieving this, if not to focus on the unresolved emotions we retain from our life?

### **Brynolf**

Yes, in Inferno we take repression a step further, and eventually repressing the repression, so our minds go back to the "empty sheet" before we are reborn. But... what if we for some reason started to remember our past lives? After all, that happens from time to time in Kult. If those memories are still tainted by angst, how will we ever be able to process, and actually "remember" them?

And what are the Memory Banks, if the only way to make us forget is by torture?

### **Zara2stra**

I liked what was written in (*Broken Doll's adventure*) "Cracks in The Mirror": the Nepharite tried to make the PCs remember and by it return them to their personal hells. Also a good question would be, what would happen to us if we started to remember not our real past lives but our purgatories?

### **Brynolf**

Originally posted by zara2stra...

Also a good question would be, what would happen to us if we started to remember not our real past lives but our purgatories?

That was kind of what I asked, too. If our pastlife memories are all too horrible to remember, how could we remember them without going nuts? Remember that all we see of a purgatory, is the memories the Nepharite is about to taint. Thus, remembering purgatory is synonymous with remembering our tainted memories from past lives.

That is, if nothing goes wrong in the purgatory (which it tends to do when PCs are involved). Say, if the PCs play an adventure where one of them is stuck in his purgatory, but the others manage to get in to save



him. Their presence and actions make the purged PC aware of that he is in hell (something most of the nepharites' clients don't), and so the "natural order" is disturbed, as the PC starts to get genuine memories of actually getting his memories stripped from him (bizarre, isn't it?) If he, in later lives remembers his past lives, it is then possible for him to actually remember Purgatory, instead of, or in addition to his "tainted" memories.

Man, I wouldn't even be able to explain this properly in Swedish... hope you follow...

### Zara2stra

Yes, I follow :)

I think that memories from past lives are so bleak that they cannot drastically change our MB. That is of course, if you assume that people can have different personalities in different incarnations (like I do). Then it is likely for the person who remembers something to take the approach as if the memories were someone else.

On the other hand of course they can be much stronger and inflict a radical change of personality and MB.

### Tintomara

Originally posted by Brynolf...

*But... what if we for some reason started to remember our past lives? After all, that happens from time to time in Kult. If those memories are still tainted by angst, how will we ever be able to process, and actually "remember" them?*

My take would be that (unless you're Awakened) the Illusion will become warped when your memories of the purgatory come rushing back. I don't think you will instantly re-create your old purgatory around yourself, but you will most certainly alert Nepharites. I would like a surfacing memory from hell to affect Non-Player Characters nearby you, twisting their minds...

### Zara2stra

That's a very interesting concept that could be perfectly usable in an adventure. If the PC is the source of the changes it could be a way to let him know that the answers rest in him. That could be also a way to worsen his MB.

Let's say that because of shock the PC remembers something from his past life/purgatory, and although it seems very distant and unreal in a way, when he gets out of the street, people start harassing him as if they knew him - mocking his actions from the past life. Thus his state is worsening - and if there is enough remembered a Nepharite shows up. It could serve as a good solo adventure

### Tintomara

Alternatively Non-Player Characters can "repeat" scenes the PC has experienced (or committed). Instead of mocking the PC, perhaps some of the Non-Player Characters suddenly gather to kill another Non-Player Character with chains, hooks and strange medic equipment... Afterwards they have no reasonable explanation.

### KingSix

Originally posted by Underspawn...

*I would say that is the exact point of it - to increase the guilt and shame until the human mind reaches breaking point. Consider what IMO is one of the best Purgatories we've read about: the Purgatory of Jeanette Beauvois (Shattered Lives - The Abyss). Her purgatory, like all Purgatories, is tailor-made for her based on the 'sins' of her life: promiscuous sex, paternal abuse and drug abuse, the things which caused her the most pain and eventually killed her. Now, Jeanette can only forget her past life when she lets go of her memories and willingly leaves the Purgatory. She will not escape until she has ceased to care about everything that once constituted her life. Thus, she must discard it. What other methods are there of achieving this, if not to focus on the unresolved emotions we retain from our life?*

Very good point. It takes a lot to stop caring about your memories. Which must be the reason why you are purged for such a long time - like forever. Makes me wonder if it hadn't been smarter by the big D to let everyone die from Alzheimer's disease.



### *Underspawn*

I think the key point is free will - big D loves his ironic punishments. Our memories are only well and truly obliterated (though probably not from the deepest levels of the immortal soul, as discussed above) when we willingly discard them. Perhaps they cannot be taken from us forcibly. We have to let go of them, and thereby end the hell (or paradise) we impose upon ourselves.

e.g.:

"The second of the Buddha's truths deals with the cause of suffering, and is called *trishna*, which is the act of clinging, grasping to hold on to things which must fade away. We are motivated to cling to things out of *avidya*, or ignorance. Out of ignorance, we divide the world into individual and separate things and so try to confine the fluid forms of reality to fixed categories created by the mind. As long as we grasp at these transitory things, we will suffer. As long as we see things as permanent and firm, when in truth they are transient and ever-changing, we are trapped in a cycle where every action generates further action and the answer to each question poses more questions."

### *Brynolf*

I don't know... of course, in the end it's a choice between suppressing the memory or letting it devour your sanity, but it's pretty much a no-brainer choice, so I wouldn't count that as free will. If we really let go of our memories willingly, what is then the role of the Nephrite? The helping mentor?

### *Zara2stra*

Well who knows. Consider the example of doctor 'what's-his-name' from Jacob's Ladder. He was acting like a mentor. (of course if you'll approve that he was a Nephrite)

### *Tintomara*

I do also consider Jeanette Beavouis' purgatory to be one of the best purgatories ever described, but I cannot understand why she would be able to leave only by letting go of her memories. She can walk away if she willingly leave her purgatory, so why can't she willingly leave her purgatory to out of a desire for revenge (without giving up her memories)? Obviously she cannot, something holds her back... but is it the Nephrite or her memories?

I would like this idea much better if the purgatory was created out of bad memories and guilt made physical (in which case the purgatory would cease to exist when she finally would "let go" of all past memories), but this concept would make the Nephrite a bit superfluous... only a creature feeding upon her suffering. Perhaps the Nephrite is needed for the suffering to get "used up" (so without a Nephrite you're stuck forever in your purgatory)?

Which brings up the question: Can a purgatory exist if nobody remembers that it exists?

### *Underspawn*

You have stated a good explanation for this earlier in the thread - comparing two duelling Nephrites to fly larvae fighting over a nest/meal (only on TLC, eh?)

Nephrites could be parasites feeding on the natural process of human purgation. Just simple evolution - we desire to torture ourselves for perceived sins, so there are organisms/entities which capitalise and flourish on that process. Sinners are the host organism from which they draw sustenance. Because guilt and shame is what the Nephrites feed on, they will not let a Purgatide go free until they have completely exhausted their foodsource. Makes sense to me.

### *Zara2stra*

I remember a fragment from 1st edition rulebook that mentioned that the Nephrites were fleeing from crumbling hells and purgatories because people started to make their own - which hints that a purgatory disappears if no one remembers it.

### *LaughingChance*



Good point brought up here. IMHO: Nepharites create an initial purgatory or are attracted to one in existence already... in preparation for the human soul it is after...if suitable. After obtaining the human soul that Purgatory is re-enforced and otherwise empowered thereafter. When the soul is cleansed it is all over... Purgatories don't necessarily exist in time as we know it, so it is possible maybe it exists even after a soul is released/freed or escapes. Purgatories and personal hells in Inferno itself may be a different story. Inferno and Astaroth are linked. One cannot be destroyed without the other, so a crumbling purgatory there can be a sign of weakness or restructuring, conservation of some type.

I'm sure in Inferno there were many standard purgatories for child molesters, serial killers, wife beaters or what have you. For the really special souls custom purgatories are created... but we know from the Purgatory sourcebook there are group purgatories.

### ***Demorney***

Speaking about group purgatories, are there any Kult references towards Dante's Inferno?

### ***Underspawn***

Not to my knowledge. Rather unbelievable that nobody has picked up on that yet.... Is Virgil Awakened?

### ***Demorney***

I'd say he's a Lictor, as he detracts Dante from the truth and shows him heaven and hell in the version Dante describes in the end.

### ***Zara2stra***

*Originally posted by LaughingChance...*

*I'm sure in Inferno there were many standard purgatories for child molesters, serial killers, wife beaters or what have you...for the really special souls custom purgatories are created... but we know from the Purgatory sourcebook there are group purgatories.*

I would ask what makes the standard? I always imagined that purgatories are as individual as the purgatide's guilt and belief on how it should look like. I think that Nepharites, Razides and all the infernal denizens are only a channelling tool for our own powers. In the middle ages the belief of hell was somewhat standarized and because people believed in almost the same image of it, and hell was exactly that way (well, maybe worse).

In the age of reason people doubt the old truths and thus are entangled in their own individual purgatories. Because we are in the state of illusory death doesn't necessarily mean that our powers can be used against our will. Notice that every physical change occurring in a state of shock is dictated by our angst and inner need to protect ourselves even if we might find most of those changes horrible and unwanted, they follow our divine instinct. The same case is, in my opinion, with purgatories.

Demiurge was very clever, basically the only thing he done was shortening our illusory lifespan and chaining us to illusion with five senses. The most important thing we've lost is our long term memory. we live our lives from one oblivion to another - and we are led to it by another thing - morals. There are really very few individuals that are devoid of guilt. On this feeling the nepharites prey. The last chain of the Demiurge, and probably the most efficient one, is the system of morals which is imposed on us by the society from the very beginning. Call it what you want: honour or ten commandments. We, in our current state, are devised to fail. There is always something that we cannot achieve. Basing on that memories and feelings of guilt the nepharites are able to channel our own energies to create a purgatory which will eventually lead us to forget about those principles that we failed along with everything that we learned during our short life.

That approach causes, as usual, another question: What with the people who don't feel guilt? The first thing is that those people are very rare. Only a drop of guilt suffices for the Nepharites to widen it to unbelievable levels. But if someone like that appears he is untouchable by Inferno. Probably untouchable by Heaven also. Here I think rather of some psychopathic killers than "saintly people". That could also be a good theme for an adventure. The players chased by a killer who feels no remorse must investigate his



long forgot past to find if but one thing that he could feel guilty of...

Hope that I made myself clear and didn't complicate this too much.

### ***LaughingChance***

Some crimes and situations are very common to the human condition. like murders of passion, robbery, drunk driving hit and run... or emotional guilt such as a child molested by a priest/parent, or a child feeling guilty for his/her parents' divorce. True or not we carry the guilty feelings all our lives. Cheating spouses, swindling money or inheritance. These are all standard purgatories to me.

Things like war crimes, medical experimentation against a subject's will, lying in court (falsely convicting someone of a crime), mass extermination or torturers. These would be special cases due to the uniqueness of the crimes and require custom purgatories in my Kultiverse. Betraying religious principals can be standard or unique. Case-by-case basis there.

### ***Zara2stra***

My Kultiverse: As I think that purgatories are partially made out of our own powers, each purgatory is more or less private and individual. Even if we "burn" in rapists hell with other rapists we still are haunted by our own victims and our experiences. The more guilt we feel about it, the more will it haunt us in our purgatory.

### ***LaughingChance***

Yes the Nephrites appear as victims or people involved in the incident the person is condemned for...but we are talking about 2 different things here: Inferno purgatories/group purgatories, and personal purgatories/personal hells In Inferno twisting Humans to empower the Purgatory isn't necessary... but can be done. In a personal Purgatory outside of Inferno the Nephrites resources are much more limited... thus twisting someone's divine power against themselves is crucial...As Humans stopped believing in Hell Nephrites were forced to adapt and create personal hells for the guilty soul. Inferno is crumbling and empty because there aren't many takers anymore.

### ***Zara2stra***

Hmmm... I am not really sure if there is such big difference between infernal/personal purgatories. We could easily assume that our ideas about hell were very alike when Inferno was still not crumbling. I see it as that: What would happen with a big building if you would take almost all bricks that were at its foundation and build smaller buildings with them? Of course the big one would fall apart. And I think that the same happened with Inferno. This could also be the reason why some of us are not entirely cleansed.

### ***LaughingChance***

I don't see that Nephrites would be much trouble for an Awakened Human to dispatch with... their real power over us is the deceit and misdirection our guilt gives them when we die. It's very hard to lie to yourself... and most humans in the Illusion feel at heart they need to account for their sins... 90% of the world or so believes in some form of God after all... Nephrites use that to their advantage... reminding the person and manipulating the soul in question of their misdoings gaining greater and greater ability to punish and cleanse the soul of the Neph's victim. Well in my humble opinion anyhow...

### ***Zara2stra***

I haven't said that Neph's are dealing with awakened here. On the contrary - I said that when we're in a purgatory we still believe our petty lives to be true. Our energies are, as you wrote, manipulated, and I think that these manipulations are feeding the inferno and Neph's power over us. Just like the snake eating his own tail WE subconsciously use our energies to cleanse ourselves and reborn, by some mischievous machination Demiurge has put our own tail into our mouths.

### ***LaughingChance***



It seems to me you implied that Inferno needs souls to continue to exist. I don't draw that correlation. Nor do I think the Nephhs need us to survive... they stepped out of the shadows or what have you... it could mean anything, especially when there are Nephhs in the Purgatory sourcebook who are as old as humanity. The DU ultimately looked at what was around, looked at what he had created and looked at us as a species and formulated his great plan, for whatever reason. I dislike the "jealous" motive but these things are distorted after all this time and the DU having gone south for the winter.

I didn't mean to imply that Nephhs go after Awakened. I think they'd run. Maybe the most powerful Nephhs the originals might make deals or something, but Awakened no longer have "feelings" as we know it, nicht wahr? Thus no guilt (that being part of the Illusion) so Nephharites need to go after a suitable victim.

### **Zara2stra**

I certainly think that purgatories need us to last. What would they be for if not for tormenting us? So after we all awake - the purgatories will cease to be. Inferno will probably survive either way but only as a desolated home of the once great Infernal denizens.

As I pointed above, when we are in shock or under influence of very strong emotions we can channel our hidden energies for example to subconsciously change our appearance. In a purgatory we are shocked almost constantly. We are subjected to fear, anger and all the negative emotions, so we "emit" more and more of our power. I think that this is used to further reinforce the purgatory stained by each individual Nephharite. So without it and without us the purgatories will vanish.

### **Demorney**

Agree, but I guess the infernal is seen too negative. At least, how I understand it they serve the purpose of 'cleansing' the sinner from troubling incidents by inflicting pain. So they're nothing more than the washing facility of our soul/life energy, trying desperately to transform the soul into a state where rebirth is possible and useful (and the new life not being hindered by past experiences).

See, lots of people have problems forgiving themselves within their given lifespan, what if you could accumulate the guilt of several lives? So the purge is nothing but part of our lifecycle and such, with the life cycle broken its useless.

### **Zara2stra**

*Originally posted by Demorney...*

*Agree, but I guess the infernal is seen too negative. At least, how I understand it they serve the purpose of 'cleansing' the sinner from troubling incidents by inflicting pain.*

Not necessarily pain. A lot of Kult fans define what you could see in the movie Jacob's Ladder as a very good example of a purgatory. It is more based on the recycled experiences from our recent life rather than pain.

### **Demorney**

Hmm, I'll specify, not physical pain, but especially the psychological one. History shows that the latter is far more effective than the physical one when it gets to coerce people into doing stuff or trying to change their behaviour / brainwash them, as this is the key of changing self esteem, view of the world and personality. If you think about it even Bill Murray's flick 'Groundhog Day' could be seen as (very Hollywood-esque) purgatory, coercing him to think about his life and changing his attitude and personality.

### **LaughingChance**

Personal Purgatories... ok evidence in the official Kultiverse might be taken from Fallen Angels, especially the ending.

I think of it like this: God-like powers can create things that exist after they are gone, so why not a purgatory? It is like a dreamworld that becomes self aware... I read a Neil Gaiman story (Sandman-related)



where a dreamed character was developed to the point of self awareness and existed although his dreamer no longer dreamed him within the realm of dreams itself.

Unless actually dissolved away wilfully by a Human with control over their divine ability... I don't see why a purgatory would simply cease if unused. Empty hells exist... I think a Purgatory could as well. It just would be mute. If you stumbled into one (empty) the Neph involved may sense it or the Human attached to it and bring a world of trouble to the trespasser - heh heh heh.. These are timeless little pocket dimensions to me, created from magic/divine abilities outside the normality we know as reality.

The Illusion is cut from Malkuth - if she is "killed" would it crumble completely? I don't think it would. It is like giving birth to something. She obviously doesn't need to actively maintain it - "set it and forget it" seems to be the rule. If an illusion or power-giving some dream or reality is destroyed at the source then I can see it crumbling away.

### ***Demorney***

Yep, funny, but it visualizes the principle how I see it. Of course Jacob's Ladder is closer to the truth here...

### ***Zara2stra***

You got a point here LC. That could be a great theme for an adventure I back the stuff about vanishing purgatories. What I also want clear: I'm not arguing about the existence of both collective/personal purgatories. I only think that each must use the experiences of the Purgatide.

### ***LaughingChance***

Agreed. Nepharites read the thoughts, secrets and sins of their intended victim and personalize things for maximum effectiveness according to their skill at doing so. But some sins are so general group purgatories are created. How personal a hell would a tax cheater get after all?

### ***Tintomara***

*Originally posted by zara2stra...*

*In a purgatory we are shocked almost constantly. We are subjected to fear, anger and all the negative emotions, so we "emit" more and more of our power. I think that this is used to further reinforce the purgatory stained by each individual Nepharite.*

Hey... you just explained "inheritable sins" to me. Perhaps by extending their influence over an individual even in life, Nepharites can prevent a purgatory from ceasing to be when that individual is reborn. The exact mechanism is not important, perhaps the Nepharite could watch over its human personally (the monster under the bed, ya' know?) or make a deal with somebody (the parents) to make sure the newborn does not forget its past sins. The idea is that by making sure that the newborn never really forget that it is tainted by sin, the Nepharite can rely on that the human will return life after life. Think of it as holding cattle. Especially in Christianity the idea is that we are born stained by the sins made by other forefathers, but maybe it is in the interest of the Nepharites that we don't forget *everything* when we die. Sure, they are supposed to erase all memories, but perhaps they don't do it perfectly *on purpose*?

### ***Underspawn***

It is stated in Purgatory that the Nepharite Elijah marks souls in such a way that they return to him after death, and also act as his (unwitting) agents during their life. We can use Brynolf's idea that the immortal soul is indelibly 'stained' by memories of sin - thus, even amnesiacs are punished for the crimes they don't remember (and so an affliction like Alzheimer's disease is no get-out-of-purgatory-free card).

### ***Zara2stra***

The idea that the sins of our forbears are still with us because of a Nepharite manipulation is very tempting. This is supporting the Nepharite rebellion, and could open some interesting ways of using it in adventures...

**-KingSix-**



As I never liked the Nephrite rebellion (sounds too much like Lictor rebellion all over again) this was a pretty interesting way to view it. Looking at it this way the Nephites' disobedience is fairly attractive.

### **Zara2stra**

Yeah, the truth is that almost everyone is rebelling against something or someone after Demiurge's disappearance... Each and every one to fulfil his own agenda. The forces that keep us imprisoned are thus more concerned about various power struggles, so some people with enhanced awareness can remain unnoticed....

### **Demorney**

Found a disturbing theory somewhere in the web whose reference is buried somewhere under my other materials. It states that life itself is nothing but a 'purgatory' (although they don't call it like this), one that we willingly endure. It says that all events are preset and we choose them before entering this world to explore ourselves and develop accordingly. Of course this is flawed as the existence of destiny is something I can't accept ... but it would explain the existence of a benevolent god seen from an imperfect world...

### **Underspawn**

*Originally posted by Demorney...*

*Of course this is flawed as the existence of destiny is something I can't accept ...*

What about in a fatalistic sense: "a man's character is his fate"? A soul could display certain characteristics which make it predisposed to make the same mistakes again and again - and this is reinforced by the Immortal Memory idea (if you accept it), and also by the concept of karmic rebirth.

### **Demorney**

To some degree, yes, but overall there are countless tiny influencing parameters which surpass the character or at least modify it. For me character and 'born traits' are just the base of the personality, everything is modified by the beings experiences and sensations. And the latter are prone to coincidence or even the decision of others.

Of course these things influence each other so the character also defines the way you take those experiences (e.g. stoic or suffering), but personal philosophies often change on a more than daily base, so I'd say personality development is a very complex system where only the start is pre set, everything else is in flux.

### **LaughingChance**

I don't think Kult is a system where a sense of pre-destiny really works. Obviously in a story that is well written it might be able to be pulled off but I like things to seem preordained but they really aren't... allowing for an unexpected twist. Otherwise it is just "connect the dots" to me.

The scaring of souls to return to a Nephites influence is a good idea though as is in Purgatory but not to the point the PC is doomed to re-enact the same sort of situation time and time again.

### **Underspawn**

Really? For me, predestiny is a defining theme of Kult. The point is that humanity's free will (which in my opinion, is the most base element of our divinity) has become increasingly constrained by an ever-more self-destructive and hubristic nature.

The nature of free will is that it does, of course, entail that we bear the full consequences of our choices (no need to quote Uncle Ben here). But such a weight is difficult to carry, and can seriously impede our enjoyment of life. So we abdicate our free will. We do what the next guy does. We do what the TV says we should. We do what the President tells us. We do what the holy men command. Consistently, we readily adopt the ideas of others rather than laboriously and systematically develop our own.

Humans are exceptional at doing what they are told, and letting others do the thinking so that they



don't have to, invariably deferring to the power with the most authoritative tone of voice. In almost every aspect of life, we delegate to the concept of a higher authority in some form or another. (Can you say you have objectively and empirically assessed every aspect of your own morality? How much of it is yours, and how much came from family, society, religion, zeitgeist? How much do you cling to out of fear of ridicule and ostracism?) 99% of the average human being's existence is wilfully devoid of truly free will. This is what I call predestiny. Our fate is not written in the stars by some supernatural deity, but in our genes and in our brains, and in the choices of our past. Nobody can escape their nature.

Our nature - to acquiesce and submit to higher power rather than assert our own individual authority and accept responsibility for our own minds and actions - is Elysium. Thus, the reclamation of divinity begins in developing our own free will (be it along a light or dark path), and the realisation that Elysium is only what somebody told us the world was like, rather than an empirical experience of the world as it is. But Elysium cannot be completely devoid of free will. In fact, it depends on it. It is the role of our jailors to ensure that what little free will they allow us is focused entirely on insignificant matters, and causing us pain and sorrow in the process. To elaborate...

The function of Purgatory is to use our pain as a lever to pry us away from our memories. The source of this pain is our guilt. Guilt is felt when our actions fall short of an ideal, a construct that exists in our minds. What that ideal is doesn't matter, only the upsetting belief that we failed to achieve it *due to some erroneous choice on our part*. There is no guilt without free will. Thus, humanity must always possess some degree of free will - though that free will may be subtly curtailed and controlled, but never eliminated entirely.

Why must our free will be preserved? Because if we are not able to make our own choices, we are not responsible for anything. If we are not responsible, we cannot feel guilty. If there is no guilt, there is no source of pain which can be amplified and used to normalise or reset our consciousness in the afterlife. If we cannot be reset after every lifecycle, we will not stay slaves for long. Thus, free will, in moderation, is the vital component of the Elysian prison.

re Neph...

A Nephrite does not torture a soul according to an external moral criteria (such as the 10 commandments, for example), but to the criteria of the individual soul (the conscience). For example: if I kill a man, believing it was the right thing to do, I will not be tormented with the memory of that act when/if I go to Purgatory, because I feel no guilt. However, if I murder a man and believe that I have done wrong, then the Nephrite will seize on my guilt and exploit it to cause me pain. The torment inflicted by a Nephrite accords only to the soul's personal morality, not the popular morality of the society they lived in. Conscience, not doctrine.

So, tax dodgers are not automatically bound to go to tax dodger hell, because not all tax dodgers believe their act to be a sin, even if their society says it is. Thus there is no guilt (and therefore pain) present for the Nephrite to exploit, meaning in that individual's personal Book of Life, his acts of tax dodging are written in black ink, not red. His own conscience asks no price of him.

The source of our guilt, pain, and captivity are mental ideals - dreams, aspirations, fantasies - which we can never fulfil. Carrots dangled from sticks. The asymptotic desire of the ego and the concept of an ever-evolving self. Wind humanity up, and watch us chase our tails for the rest of eternity, our memories reset after every rotation.

### *Thearmiger*

I like the point just made especially the idea that you may not be tormented for what you expect to be. Has anyone played Taroticum? in that, the players are meant to be the past servants of a licitor gone bad, and in the future lives they have they have to pay for sins of the past they don't even remember.

### *LaughingChance*

If you are planning an adventure and have a PC put in to Purgatory they can understand being tormented for murdering someone, evil deeds and their dark secret(s) but to just spring a torture of Purgatory on them for something totally unknown would cause a riot with my players any day of the week. If they feel



you are just messing with them Kult is no fun for them... you need purpose.

The only exception would be entering someone else's Purgatory maybe... I think we need to lead the players along a little in the beyond death areas of the game... so they can grasp a little of what is going on and what is expected of them or allow them a route to explore... Besides I think a Nephrite torturing a human for something they have no memory of or didn't even do would put the Nephrite at a weakened stance. Their power over us is by our own guilt and acceptance of our misdoings.

If the adventure is to discover a past life and make amends like with Tarot... then that is a different story. Here you need pregenerated characters, history and stats to play out. It would be unfair to dilute someone's character up like that otherwise.

### **Zara2stra**

It is possible LC - Cracks In The Mirror is a perfect example of this. First, they shouldn't know from the beginning that they are in a purgatory. You can hint it but let it be a surprise to them. Second, you can always delicately trick them into doing something they will feel guilty of, or believing that they did, simply by using their own actions in the previous adventure as a base for some mischief... for example by showing them some nasty effects of something they did in the past and thought it was harmless.

### **LaughingChance**

*Originally posted by zara2stra...*

*...for example by showing them some nasty effects of something they did in the past and thought it was harmless...*

That to me is a different case entirely... why would they attract a Nephrite if they didn't have guilt until it was pointed out to them their actions cause harm somehow... it is just weak to me... very weak.

### **Zara2stra**

It actually depends on your players. If they are empathic enough they'll feel guilt then... it might be not the guilt that has taken the characters to the purgatory, but after they're in the Nephrite will probably use all of his cannons on the characters.

### **LaughingChance**

It's funny you don't see such intense takes on Razides, Archons, Death Angels, DU & Astaroth as you do on the Nephrites. I think everyone secretly loves the Nephrite idea... Lictors have their moments but this forum is Neph-happy!

### **Thearmiger**

That makes sense though. The other creatures you mention are merely enemies. What is more fascinating than a nemesis so personal? And with such arcane rules? When I think of nephrites I can't help but think of Hellraiser, where the group of Cenobites are ordered by Pinhead not to touch the mute girl, saying, "It is not hands that call us, it is desire." The other thing is that in a sense they are us; us taken to the place of T.S. Eliot's Hollow Men. The subtlety of them is intriguing; they are summoned by puzzle boxes, they deal in our deepest guilts and strangest secrets. They're fascinating!

### **Zara2stra**

I think that the Nephrites are simply the most usable of the above in the adventures. Archons, Death Angels, The Demiurge or Astaroth are simply to distant to appear in person (or as an incarnate). Casting such creatures could be misunderstood as some kind of D&D-ish Uberboss.

### **Thearmiger**

I'm not sure I agree that having things you don't remember for your characters is abusing them - since that is a central point of the game, isn't it?

### **LaughingChance**



Players can take their characters seriously. One time I had a step-brother turn up that the player didn't know he had (from an unfaithful parent), and it did not go over well. The player said they had their family outlined and there was no brother and it got disruptive. The point is I don't think we should tinker with PCs too much, you can't make it something the player doesn't want to play... tread carefully. If you are playing with predetermined characters then do what you want how attached to them can they really be/get.

### *Underspawn*

I'm not averse to a little merciless punishment, but I agree that the players should know - eventually, at least - why such bad fortune befell them. The question of whether or not PC's can/should be tortured in purgatory for sins they do not recall committing (and thus suffer no guilt for), can be addressed (again) by Brynolf's indelible sin idea. A person's conscious recollections are irrelevant - the soul knows the sins it has committed, suffers guilt for them, and so Nepharites come swarming like flies to poop. If this were not the case, amnesiacs would never go to purgatory.

Consider someone dying of a brain tumour - they could have their brain (and all memory functions) turned to mush before they die. Do they not have to worry about purgatory just because they died in a vegetative state, not even knowing their own name? It makes sense that there be something more fundamental - a divine core, which I guess is easiest to call a soul, which remembers everything. So, to exploit these sins for sustenance, the Nepharite must first remind the Purgatide of his sins. Not so weak IMO, more excellent drama.

### *LaughingChance*

It's a funny thing... I own and love the movie Angel Heart - it was one of the first DVD's I ever bought and I think it is done well. That is the way I aspire my Kult-writing/adventures to be. In that movie he was untouchable until he discovered and accepted his guilt, not be dragged down and then discover it while being punished. I just can't wrap my arms around it.

If you take a pen home from work, that is stealing if it is a company pen...their property... not many if anyone is going to be up all night drowned in guilt for their actions... many won't even consider it stealing but an acceptable loss the company expects... a Nepharite wouldn't be attracted to the person to punish them... I think you should be tight in playing the Nepharite angle unless it is really called for...

If, for the better good (as the PCs see it, anyway), they kill someone or commit torturous acts to get information, something gruesome and vile, no matter what their motive - they can have enough guilt. It is the human condition to think "maybe there was another way". I would build up to it though, have someone resembling the person they wronged about... maybe they find out that person was innocent... or a stray shot killed a child... let it fester with them before bringing in a Nepharite. That to me is how they are effective and not just another monster or encounter IMHO.

As for the argument that the soul knows: I don't buy that. The soul knows we were once Gods. It is the soul that gives our fears dominion over us within the Illusion. The prison is powered largely by our acceptance... awakened are free of these things. I think the human soul in Kult in its purity knows neither good or evil, so I think that point is moot. The guilt we have in Kult is part of the Illusion and process. The conscious mind must know what it has done to be punished. Once that is stripped away the person is reborn right?

### *Zara2stra*

Angel Heart is a good example of perverted "Sins of the fathers" syndrome... because Harry is actually a completely different man - that of course doesn't stop the devil from claiming payment for his services. But I think it is not based on guilt, in Kult terms I would compare it to a demonologist and an Azghoul case.

### *LaughingChance*

Angel Heart (SPOILERS)

Here is a guy who thought he could escape punishment by becoming someone else, free of the knowledge



of his sins. The "Devil" in this case hires him as a detective to investigate his past life... find out all the details of his misdoings and eventually who he really is... once that was known to Harry, the Devil could claim him... not having been fooled by his trickery. Also here is that he made a deal with the Devil, but I like the way this movie handles it. If Harry was dragged to hell as an innocent and then told of his guilt it would be a real short and dull movie.

### Zara2stra

Here is a guy who thought he could escape paying his debts. His soul was the price for fame and wealth... As for what happens with it when you promise it to the devil it is not said not in the movie, neither in many tales of people selling their souls. Nepharites don't make the devilish deals (maybe because of the fact that in the tales, people usually fool the devil) That is why I think the situation from the movie was more appropriate for an Azghoul than for a Nepharite...

### *LaughingChance*

The Devil in this case represents the Infernal Order in Kult terms, not being a Kult product. He could be a Nepharite, Death Angel...that's not important - the premise is what I am illustrating for you. The person needs to know what he is being punished for - then punished... once he knew all the evil he did Harry was overwhelmed with his emotions and vulnerable to the Infernal Order (the Devil).

### *Underspawn*

Originally posted by *LaughingChance*...

*As for the argument that the soul knows... I don't buy that...the soul knows we were once Gods... it is the soul that gives our fears dominion over us within the Illusion... the prison is powered largely by our acceptance... awakened are free of these things... I think the human soul in Kult in its purity knows neither good or evil... so I think that point is moot...The guilt we have in Kult is part of the Illusion and process. The conscious mind must know what it has done to be punished. Once that is stripped away the person is reborn right?*

Alright, you've got a point there, but the issue is only with the semantics. The soul is beyond all conceptions of good and evil and should be treated as Awakened. We need a better term to express indelible memory (a memory which we carry with us after death, after brain-destroying illnesses, and not dependent upon the neurological action of conscious remembering), which records what we consider to be our sins.

The soul remembers nothing, because the soul clings to nothing. So perhaps it should be called a spiritual memory... terrible acts stain our spirit (what could be called our body and mind beyond death) and affect our mental balance. Or, should it just be considered our conscience, an inescapable subconscious Book of Life, and the most potent curse of our imprisonment.

### *Tintomara*

Originally posted by *Underspawn*...

*We need a better term to express indelible memory (a memory which we carry with us after death, after brain-destroying illnesses, and not dependent upon the neurological action of conscious remembering), which records what we consider to be our sins.*

I think it would be enough that *somebody* out there remembers our sins. The day when this "*somebody*" will eventually come back to tell us about our past sins, I can picture three possible things to happen:

We re-adopt (remembers or believe in them) all our old sins, and go to Hell (literally or not, depends upon what personality we have, and what powers this "*somebody*" has).

We re-adopt our sins, but manage to convince this "*somebody*" to give us forgiveness. We are now Free Of Sin (™).

We smile at the accusations, and call for the mental asylum to carry this whining sicko away. The fun thing is: If somebody accuses you of having done terrible deeds in a "past life", and you start to feel guilty of this (because you believe in the accusation), you are really innocent, but you don't know this. Now what will the Nepharites do?

I think that "the moral majority" is the real "Book of Life" where past sins are remembered.



### **Underspawn**

Perhaps this eschatological snitch is our shadow. Of course, the shadow doesn't take physical form in Elysium until about -250 or thereabouts, but maybe even the slightest deviation from 0 MB generates it (most probably in Vortex), and it will be called upon to confess all it knows when we die.

*Originally posted by Tintomara...*

*I think that "the moral majority" is the real "Book of Life" where past sins are remembered.*

(I might be reading you wrong, but...) The morality of the Moral Majority cannot be considered the 'Book of Life' by which we are judged. A dead person's personal morality may happen to agree with that of their milieu (which it usually does, but not always, in which case, this is only coincidental), but personal morality - specifically the perceived wrongdoings we see ourselves as responsible for - is what a Nephrite feeds on.

All guilt is illusory, a symptom of the karma-bound, Elysian mind which refuses to let go. (As is the reverse of guilt - innocence and the resultant expectation of afterlife rewards - which, incidentally, is why there needs to be a paradise to satisfy the desires of positive MB people and return them to 0 MB.

So IMO, yes, you can be punished for a crime which you falsely believe you have committed IF you are of negative MB due to the guilt your belief causes you to feel. The purpose the Nephrite serves is to return the purgatide to a guilt-free state 0 MB - mentally satisfied and untroubled. Nephrites have no objective considerations of justice, only the desire to do the job of resetting us to MB 0, as our guilt demands. A catholic goes to purgatory just for being born, whereas a serial child-abusing member of NAMBLA gets instant rebirth, if not a brief stint in paradise.

### **Tintomara**

*Originally posted by Underspawn...*

*(I might be reading you wrong, but...) The morality of the Moral Majority cannot be considered the 'Book of Life' by which we are judged. A dead person's personal morality may happen to agree with that of their milieu (which it usually does, but not always, in which case, this is only coincidental), but personal morality - specifically the perceived wrongdoings we see ourselves as responsible for - is what a Nephrite feeds on.*

Well, yes... we are only punished for our own guilt and shame. I think I follow you to some extent - there is "guilt" that we might be punished for, of which other people have heard nothing. What I say is that it is enough that somebody remembers past sins, and whose interest it is to remind us.

All humans are born equipped with a device that is constantly trying to read the ideas of the "Moral Majority", what they like and what they don't. This device is designed to make us behave in such a way that we do what the "Moral Majority" think is good (be it killing Jews or selling soup to the poor and homeless), at the same time trying to obtain the best possible outcome for oneself. This device is called "a brain", and it takes many years of training to ignore the "Moral Majority". Nobody is born a sociopath, but any child can become one in just a few years. It's a lot harder for adult people.

And don't forget the eagerness of the "Moral Majority" to remind you about everything bad you might have done. Young human children may remember your sins for a hundred years, and they are eager to tell you about it. They might even tell their children. There is really no need for anything supernatural to remember our past sins.

By the way, in Kult humans are reborn. Many people think that we are responsible for old sins, even if we don't remember them. Old debts are inherited by your children. Now, if you're reborn (and according to the 2<sup>nd</sup> sourcebook, most people are reborn into the same ethnic group, the same sex, and often the same bloodline as they had in previous lives), then an opportunity arises to remind you about these old sins once more, and punish you for it "in the afterlife". That may be the reason to long bloodwars between old families. They might not know about rebirth for a fact, but they might know instinctively.

And the Nephrites watch from afar, until their time has come again...

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END

# Tormentum Insomniae



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